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PAST PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT
OF A SHORT-TERM
PREMARITAL INSTITUTE

by

MARY SHEILA BARRETT

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

May

1986

DEDICATION

To my parents John and Analie,
to John and Donna, Patrick and Jo Ann
and
to all who choose life
by initiating and nurturing
significant human relationships.

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I reserve a special expression of love for my family, especially my Dad who died during the term of this study, my mother from whom I learned my first and most enduring lessons about choosing life, to my sister Sherry who generously spent long hours helping me tabulate responses, to my brother, John, for his surprise visits, and to family members Joan, John III, and Joe for their love and support across the

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VITA

The author, Mary Sheila Barrett, was born April 13, 1939, at Grosse Pointe, Michigan. She is the daughter of Analie C. (Maurer) Barrett and the late John Joseph Barrett. Her brothers are John and Patrick and her sisters are Joan and Sherry.

She received her elementary education in the parochial school system of Detroit, Michigan, and her secondary education at the St. Gertrude High School, St. Clair Shores, Michigan, where she graduated in June, 1957. In September, 1957, she attended Marquette University for one year. She entered the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary at Boston, Massachusetts, in February, 1959, and while living in Boston attended Regis College for one year before being assigned to the West Indies in 1967. She completed teacher training at St. Joseph Teachers' College, Kingston, Jamaica, in 1971, and taught in Jamaica and Haiti for ten years.

From 1983-85 she was a member of the graduate staff of the Pastoral Psychotherapy Institute, Park Ridge, Illinois. In May, 1985, the degree of Master of Pastoral Studies was conferred on her by Loyola University of Chicago.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most marriage counselors, members of the clergy, and the general public would agree that premarital education or counseling is a valuable preparation for couples intending to marry. However, there is little written that encourages premarital counseling (PMC), and even less written about its effectiveness.

The extent and kind of PMC varies from culture to culture. In African cultures, for example, the various societies require that the family of the bride give careful scrutiny of the fiance and of his family before consent to marry is finally contracted. In so-called primitive societies the adolescent is inducted into marriage after a series of rituals. In contrast to these societies, there are some, such as the American, that require no contract between the families of the two marrying parties. In the United States family advice and consent to a couple intending to marry has even lessened. Yet, couples generally seek the approval of their parents. In contemporary American society, church and professional counseling-based agencies organize programs which aim to provide the necessary counsel for couples intending to marry.

Premarital counseling is a vehicle that offers information which is intended to help couples prepare themselves for marriage. While PMC has been recognized for years as a useful technique for bonding the marital relationship, this technique has not been emphasized as much as others in the general area of marriage and family counseling (Stahmann and Hiebert, 1980). By failing to give due importance to PMC, marriage and family counseling has often underrated the full development and potential of marital relationship enhancement. Mace (1948:147) believes that PMC allows couples to adjust smoothly and quickly to marriage by helping them to determine at an early stage whether they need marital therapy. He states:

The really constructive function of counselling is not to enable married people to avoid the worst, but to help them creatively to achieve the best, in their life together.

On the question of marital adjustment, Rolfe (1976) has shown in his retrospective study of premarital relationships as they evolve into marriage that marital adjustment is significantly related to premarital adjustment. Matheson (1977) reports the same findings with regard to several key issues of adjustment: (i) areas of conflict and conflict resolution; (ii) intimacy; (iii) role expectations; (iv) finances; and (v) family of origin. Where such issues can be addressed through premarital education programs they are better understood early in the couple relationship.

Even though the Rolfe and Matheson studies show that early marriage adjustment is related to premarital adjustment, the question may well be asked: then how can the increased rate of divorce in the United States be accounted for?

The literature shows that the divorce rate pertains to all social and economic levels of the United States society, and even among the middle class which in the past has shown the greatest degree of stability. Glick (1975) presents several interrelated elements associated with social change and urbanization which are contributing factors to divorce. They include: (i) the doctrine of individualism; (ii) the trend toward equality of the sexes; (iii) the trend toward social acceptance of divorce; and (iv) affluence.

Olson (1983) observes:

In spite of the high divorce rate, couples continue to marry_ over two million did so last year. Marriage continues to be the most popular voluntary institution in our society, with over 90 percent of the people eventually marrying at least once. One out of every four marriages every year involves couples in which one or both have married before, but even couples married previously often do not take time to prepare for remarriage.

Obtaining marriages licenses in most states is easier than getting a driver's license. To obtain a driver's license one needs to pass a test for vision, pass a written exam on driving rules and regulations, and demonstrate the ability to drive safely. Being married is more difficult than driving a car and more people are hurt by divorce than by car accidents. Nearly 50 percent of the couples currently marrying will

eventually divorce, possibly because of the lack of marriage preparation (Olson, 1983:65).

Numerous articles have been written which attempt to achieve a greater understanding of factors contributing to divorce and to divorce adjustment. A limited number of research efforts has also attempted to gather divorced persons' perceptions regarding marriage and remarriage, but there has been little research conducted to find out how divorced persons perceive their premarital adjustment, their opinions or knowledge about PMC, or their ideas about what issues need to be included in a premarital counseling or education program. Nonetheless, the increased divorce rate in the United States has given rise to an increasing concern for the need for premarital counseling and education.

Stahmann and Hiebert (1980) have taken up the whole question of premarital counseling. They consider that the context of premarital counseling is crucial in shaping both the methodology of the counseling and the expectations of the premarital couple (1980:34). They relate that marriage and family therapists and the clergy are currently the principal providers of PMC. Matheson also (1977:8) believes that marriage and family therapist trainers have a great influence on the process of premarital counseling. The premarital counseling views of those who train counselors for marriage and family therapy are vital in shaping the attitudes of those who direct PMC programs.

Very little research has been conducted to determine what marriage and family therapist trainers perceive as being important aspects of a premarital counseling program, apart from Matheson's study (1977), which searches for ways to develop a program to train premarital counselors. The possibility that therapists and clergy view the premarital couple differently has been little researched, although there is undoubtedly some overlap in the types of couples seen by marriage and family therapists and by the clergy.

The whole question of religion plays an important role in the total process of premarital education in the United States where there are countless religious denominations, each with its own tradition regarding doctrinal issues, religious and liturgical practices. There also exists a wide range of traditions regarding the role expectations of the pastor as premarital counselor.

Stahmann and Hiebert (1980:35) note that if the clergy member is performing a marriage as an agent of the denomination, certain values, expectations and characteristics will be sought and approved of in the couple coming to be married. If, on the other hand, the clergyperson is performing the wedding in the civil sense, the expectations and characteristics being sought in the couple might be quite different. This tension, then, is enhanced, particularly when couples are primarily interested in having their relationship legalized and are not particularly interested in seeing it either as explicitly Christian in nature

or as symbolizing or initiating their participation in active Church life.

These same authors (1980:35) also note the existence of the diverse expectations among congregations with regard to PMC. The diversity arises from such factors as the variety of religious traditions, the types of parishes, the nature and kind of pastor training, prevailing social attitudes, and the size and composition of the community.

Another expectation common to nearly all denominations is the pastoral expectation. With the pastoral counseling movement and the change in specific religious and/or ritualistic emphasis, clergy are trained and/or expected to meet the counseling needs of parishioners.

Given the wide variety of expectations placed on the pastoral premarital counselor, the model adopted in premarital counseling will be influenced by factors such as: (i) guardianship expectations, characterized as investigative and examining and constructed to meet institutional expectations; and (ii) a methodology designed to place the people in a more important position than the institution and its ideals or expectations, taking the people as they are in their relationships. This latter factor often influences the professional pastoral counselor with his/her background exposure and training in the developmental model of approaching premarital couples.

Statement of the Problem

Guldner (1971:115) and Stahmann and Hiebert (1980:33) state that clergy in the United States are the chief providers of premarital preparation programs. Since clergy are licensed to legalize marriages, society expects the clergy to meet the general needs of couples preparing themselves for marriage. The role of the clergy in this area has become more prominent given the fact that family advice and consent to a couple intending to marry has lessened, and yet, society expects couples to prepare themselves for marriage. For their part, couples are generally obliged to turn to the church in their preparation for marriage. The underlying assumption is that the church best knows what needs should be addressed in premarriage programs.

Given then that the clergy are the main providers of premarital preparation programs and that the societal expectations placed on (i) clergy to provide premarital preparation and on (ii) couples intending to marry to seek this help, the problem can be formulated in the following way: "Are the clergy effective providers of premarital preparations if they operate out of the model of church-institutional guardianship expectations? Can the clergy therefore be expected to provide the type of preparation that corresponds to the diverse and comprehensive needs of the variety of couples seeking premarital guidance? How do the clergy's expectations correspond to couples' needs and expectations which do not necessarily accord with those of clergy?"

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine at the time of follow-up, the degree of perceived helpfulness which the past participants (1980-1984) received from the program conducted by the Premarital Institute at Lutheran General Hospital.

The Premarital Institute at Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge, Illinois, is a short-term program designed to help couples prepare themselves for marriage intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. It is with the objective of supplementing the premarital programs already being conducted in local parishes, that Lutheran General Hospital offers this four-week Premarital Institute. (See Appendix E).

The goal of this study is to review the Institute's format and to discover useful and needed changes in the format based on data collection and past participants' perceptions. The hope is optimal provision of professional resources to couples as they prepare themselves for marriage.

A thirty-six item questionnaire was administered to the past participants (1980-1984) for the data collection purpose of this study. (See Appendices B, C and D).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined according to their use in this study:

Clergy: those persons who officiate in religious ceremonies including priests, ministers, or ecclesiastical officials collectively. (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981).

Couples: those men and women who attended the Premarital Institute.

Marriage preparation: an education program that enables couples to broaden their understanding of the essentially human and Christian aspects of marriage through discussions, exercises, and presentations, so that they may be helped to explore the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship in terms of their future life together.

Past participants: those men and women who had attended the Institute's program, 1980-1984.

Perceived helpfulness: input that past participants consider to contribute directly to the fulfillment of a need or to the achievement of an end.

Premarital counseling: that counseling process in which couples are involved in a small group setting that focuses on the facilitation of self-understanding and on various significant aspects of their personalities and their relationship. The primary role of the leader is that of counselor and facilitator who

guides the couples in their exploration and awareness process (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1980:87).

Premarital education: that teaching process conducted in a large structured group setting with the main focus upon the acquisition of information and skills of learning rather than on individual exploration or deviation from the prearranged format. The leader's role is primarily that of instructor or teacher (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1980: 87).

Delimitations of the Study

1. This survey was restricted to those who had participated in the Premarital Institute who at the time were residents in Illinois.
2. This survey was restricted to couples who had attended from 1980-1984 inclusive.
3. This survey was restricted to those couples who attended at least three of the four sessions offered at the Institute.

Assumptions for this Study

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. That the questionnaire was a useful research instrument and that it provided adequate data to fulfill the purpose of this study.
2. That all respondents participated willingly and honestly.

3. That the information from the data gained may benefit the Premarital Institute in its ongoing development of its program for couples preparing for marriage.

Organization of the Remainder
of the Study

A review of the literature and research relative to this study is presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 sets out the methodological procedures. Chapter 4 presents the examination and analyses of the data. The summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are included in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter I indicated that couples need to have programs that help prepare them for marriage and family life. This chapter will review the premarital counseling literature and research relative to this study. Areas reviewed will include the following: the need for premarital preparation; the history of premarital counseling; goals and assumptions of premarital counseling; diversity of professionals engaged in premarital counseling; formats for premarital counseling; content of premarital counseling; process of premarital counseling; and, effectiveness of premarital counseling.

Need for Premarital Preparation

Individuals in a marriage relationship often seek help to end their marriage; too few couples seek help to begin their relationship.

It is the shared position of some writers (Ziegler and Mazen, 1975:29) that there is no contract that is entered into by more people, more times and that affects more lives than the marriage contract. There likewise is no other contract for which there seems to be more

disregard for the content, consequences and meaning than is found in the present day marriage agreements. These authors believe that few people would enter into any other agreement with as little preparation, knowledge, and clarity as people typically possess on entering marriage.

A review of the literature shows that the high divorce rate in this country has led to an increased concern for the need for marriage preparation programs. Statistical reports show that the divorce rate set a record high in 1981 (5.3 per 1,000 population), (National Center for Health Statistics, 1985). The literature also offers diverse viewpoints as to what lies behind divorce- emotional divorce, physical divorce and legal divorce.

Stahmann and Hiebert (1980:10) note Butterfield's belief that many people are disappointed or develop problems in marriage because they bring to it so little in either useful skills or helpful attitudes.

As a cause of failure in marriage, Ellis (1961) gives ignorance about the nature of the marriage relationship itself. Many people assume that they will automatically know how to adapt to a marital relationship and to family life without even the most elementary preparation for the demands of marriage. Ellis thinks that such a lack of preparation for marriage is amazing given that people are not expected to know how to drive, golf, dance or play an instrument without some instruction. His view is that just as there are social skills to be learned, so also there are interpersonal skills to be learned for mature relationship building in marriage and family life.

Rutledge (1966:19) identifies discovery of selfhood, continued growth as a person, and communication and problem-solving skills as basic factors in preparing for marriage. He claims that (1966:1):

A clear-cut realistic sense of self-identity is the cornerstone of the marital structure.

Stahmann and Barclay-Cope (1977) postulate that one of the main reasons for trouble in marriage is that couples do not receive the help and information they need about marriage either before or after they get started in the marital relationship. The lack of serious preparation for marriage is an important factor contributing to marital problems.

Marriage is traditionally based on notions such as care, respect and love (Ziegler and Mazen, 1975). However, equally true are the concrete behaviors of marriage: living together, agreeing and disagreeing, and continually communicating.

Marriage is also based on a contract. Built into every contract- no less the marriage contract- are three integral processes: clarity, agreement and commitment. All three are essential components of the life and development of any couple's relationship. The authors posit that the failure in so many marriages is the result of a breakdown in the development of any of the three processes of the contract.

The Sheridans, in their book The Sexual Marriage (1974:19), reflect that a wedding day is not a goal or an achievement. "It is a spiritually, legally, mutually contracted beginning."

With the existing need for better marriage preparation in the United States the question that comes to mind is: Why is more premarital counseling not done? Several authors, (Matheson, 1977; Rolfe, 1976; Shonick, 1975) contend that one reason why more premarital counseling and educational programs are unavailable is the lack of emphasis placed upon the need for marriage preparation by most state governments. The authors mention states that have begun to address this need by requiring premarital counseling before a marriage license can be procured. However, to date there has been no study done to determine if such programs are followed through or to what degree premarital counselors are trained to meet the state mandates.

Another reason why more premarital counseling and education programs are not available is the lack of emphasis placed upon premarital programs by state governments. Some state governments do require premarital counseling to increase the possibility of couples achieving more stable and satisfying marriage and family relationships.

Since 1970, California law has required premarital counseling before receipt of a marriage license where one of the parties is under eighteen. The primary focus of counseling is on communication and education rather than upon treatment (Shonick, 1975).

The law in Michigan (Rolfe, 1976) states that persons under the legal age of consent (males under 18, females under 16) must have the written permission of their parents to get married. Furthermore, the marriage

license will be issued at the discretion of the probate judge in the county where one of the parties resides.

A law in the state of Utah (Matheson, 1977) provides the authority and guidelines for any county to make premarital counseling available to those applying for a marriage license under 19 years of age and for previously divorced persons. The law is difficult to implement however, because officials have so many other seemingly pressing matters.

History of Premarital Counseling

The history of premarital counseling and education shows how relatively recent the concept of premarital counseling and education programs are in our society even though marriage of some sort has existed throughout the entire period of human history (Mace, 1975). More premarital counseling/education needs to be made available to couples to help them prepare for a healthy, happy marital relationship.

Stahmann and Hiebert's research (1980:4) shows that the first mention of premarital counseling as an important process in building emotional and physical health was made by Dr. Robert L. Dickinson (1928) in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology. From that time until immediately following World War II the main thrust of the literature written about premarital counseling dealt with the physician's role and his/her expected counsel to couples during a mandatory physical exam. For ten years following the War no new literature on premarital counseling was added.

The 1950s was a time when the clergy began to develop literature that related to premarital counseling (Burkhart, 1950; Foster and Laidlow, 1950; Mace, 1952; Smith, 1950; Tingle, 1958; Wise, 1959; and Wiser, 1959). Stahmann and Hiebert (1980:4) note that in 1956 the first comprehensive and authoritative book on the subject of premarital counseling, The Premarital Consultation, was written by Stone and Levine. Concurrently, a professional literature apart from medicine and theology began to develop (Matheson, 1977; Mudd, 1957; Stone and Levine, 1956).

Academic courses on preparation for marriage were held at the graduate level at Boston University in 1924 by Dr. Ernest R. Groves. In 1929, graduate students at Teachers' College, Columbia University in New York City were offered a similar course. In 1942, the University of Chicago held a symposium in Contemporary Marriage and Family Problems. Focus was turning to the group approach in premarital counseling, on the premarital interview and evaluation, and on testing. Today, marriage preparation courses are offered on nearly every university campus (Stahmann and Hiebert, 1980).

The history of premarital counseling indicates futuristic needs perceived early on by some authors concerned about preparing couples for marriage. In an article entitled: Marriage Counseling Today and Tomorrow (1950:40), Dr. Abraham Stone predicts:

The chief task of marriage counseling of tomorrow will be to further marital stability by preventive measures ...Instead of dealing merely with ailing marriages, marriage counseling will be concerned with the broad principles of constructive education and preparation for marriage and family life, which will be a part of the individual's general preparation for life in our society.

Bridgman (1959:59) states that premarital counseling is generally more a matter of instruction and guidance than of exploration into discord and difficulties. He found counselors to be of two different orientations to persons. One group dealt with hypotheses regarding the emotional patterns of the client and used them as working tools to relieve current emotional conflict and anxiety. Another group of counselors was convinced that systematic diagnoses were necessary before effective help could be given.

Until the late 1960s both nonclergy and clergy looked upon premarital counseling as having a repair orientation and a pathological focus. Rutledge (1968) however, saw the role of the pastoral counselor and of the secular counselor as examining the emotional readiness of a couple for marriage (Stahmann and Hiebert, 1980). Rutledge concluded that if all clinicians would devote one-fourth of their time to premarital counseling they could make a greater impact upon the health of this country than through all of their remaining activities combined.

Stahmann and Barclay-Cope (1977:296) observe that many marriage counselors are so set in the therapeutic approaches to dealing with marital pathology that they find it difficult to make the transition into premarital counseling. The authors view premarital counseling as most appropriately an educational function, in that most premarital counseling does not deal with persons and relationships with serious dysfunction. Premarital counseling is offered to relatively healthy persons as

an experience intended to enhance and enrich growing relationships, not to treat pathological ones.

Whitaker and Keith (1977) believe that marriage counselors can make the situation more complicated if they see couples' ambivalence about divorce as an individual problem and if they cooperate in a too early resolution of the attendant ambivalence.

Early writers saw premarital counseling as primarily an educational and informational service. More recently, Mace (1972) challenges marriage counselors to move away from the remedial routine and focus their energies on marriage preparation and marriage enrichment.

The review of literature shows that, historically, preparation for marriage has been both clinical and sometimes educational, and in many instances both have gone together to assist couples to adequately prepare themselves for marriage (Matheson, 1977).

Goals and Assumptions of Premarital Counseling

Premarital counseling as previously shown is one means to provide couples with information and techniques of value in developing a healthy marriage.

Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman (1976) maintain that a key aim of premarital counseling is to equip the relationship rather than repair it. They believe that development of communication skills is the best course

to pursue with couples rather than offer the usual supply of information to create informed attitudes and values, forecast problems, and teach normative role behaviors. Persons may not experience what is being projected or may never encounter the problems being anticipated. The program which these authors recommend has an educational-developmental orientation. It is designed to specifically focus on the nature of interpersonal relationships themselves. The program equips the couple(s) with perspectives and skills to enable them to direct the course of their relationship in day-to-day decisions through metacommunication skills, that is, teaching them to "communicate about their communication".

These authors' Couple Communication (CC) goals are: (i) to increase each couple's ability to reflect on and accurately perceive their own dyadic processes by refining each member's private self-awareness of his/her own contribution to interaction; (ii) helping couples explore their own rules of relationship particularly concerning their rules for conflict situations and their patterns of maintaining self and other's esteem; and (iii) to increase each couple's capacity for clear, direct, open metacommunication, especially communication about their relationship (thoughts, feelings, intentions).

Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman (1976:13) state:

Four distinctive styles of communication are presented in MCCP (Minnesota Couples Communication Program). Possession of a complete repertoire of interactional styles within a relationship suggests flexibility and potential adaptability to a variety of internal and external constraints encountered by the system. However, in this

research it was found that few couples possess a full repertoire of interactional styles. Couples most often lack a high self information and focused style of communicating. Thus in order to expand couples' interactional alternatives, considerable time is spent in refining skills which support this style of communication during serious discussions.

When members of an engaging pair share perspectives and skills requisite to interpersonal competence, their choices are increased, both inside their relationship and outside their relationship as they encounter other systems. CC attempts to enhance a couple's autonomy and ability to cope by increasing their internal resources and thus reducing dependency on chance circumstances or external resources such as professional counselors.

Van Zoost (1973) evaluated a five-session premarital group communication skills program that made extensive use of video tape feedback as well as video taped models and behavioral rehearsal. Results showed significant increase about participants' knowledge of communication as well as increase in the amount of self-disclosure to partners. Participants' program evaluation indicated that the program, especially the use of video tapes and behavioral rehearsal, improved communication behaviors.

Other authors suggest that facilitating communication is only one aspect of premarital counseling and that couples need exposure to other important areas, for example, legal rights. The purpose of premarital legal counseling using the family counselor and attorney as an interdisciplinary team, according to Bernstein (1977), is not solely to discuss principles, but to gain agreement regarding parties' individual rights and responsibilities, to understand important provisions of a family code, and to essentially enter into a "contract" whereby each partner agrees with the other to handle rights and obligations.

Shonick (1975) states that the most important assumption underlying the model developed in the Community Health Services is that the couple's request for marriage counseling does not necessarily reflect immaturity or psychopathology, but may represent their hopes for the future. This program emphasizes the importance of communication between the partners and also explores important areas of daily living such as plans for future work and education, family life, sexuality, family planning, parenting, and use of leisure time.

Stahmann and Hiebert (1977) provide the following list of goals of prewedding counseling: (i) discovery of the basic "selfhood" of each partner; (ii) discovering the other's selfhood; (iii) making sense out of behaviour; (iv) development of communication skills; and (v) opening up vital areas for communication.

The Whiteheads (1981:131) raise a number of poignant questions couples need to ask themselves before getting married:

In this early stage of the passage into marriage, a couple might inquire: From what is each of us separating? What must we let go as we move into this new relationship? What, for instance, are our expectations about closeness to our parents and family? Do we have significantly different notions about our independence from, or continuing relation with, these families? It can be very useful to examine these questions for a first time now rather than two years after we are married.

In all premarital counseling, one of the goals is to take the couple through a thorough examination of their plans involving use of their intelligence, their feelings, and a strong measure of reality testing (Rolfe, 1976).

Diversity of Professionals

Engaged in Premarital Counseling

From the review of literature, it appears that professionals involved with premarital counseling are: physicians, ministers, psychologists, counselors, social workers, pastoral psychotherapists, lawyers, educators, marriage and family therapists and genetic counselors. However, the literature also shows that there are a variety of views as to what role professionals have in premarital counseling. Matheson (1977) believes that such varying views are due in part to the different emphasis each profession places upon premarital counseling.

Numerous statements could be cited to show the diversity of opinion concerning who really does premarital counseling or who does it the most. In the end what does it matter who delivers the counseling service? The issue, according to Matheson (1977:38) needs to be focused on what is being done and could better be done in a variety of settings by qualified persons.

Schonick (1975) provides some data that lends credence to the idea that clergy provide most of the premarital counseling. She reported that in 1972, in California, of 4000 couples who applied for a marriage license, 2,745 used the clergy for premarital counseling.

Stahmann and Hiebert (1980) surveyed the field and found that there appear to be three main providers of premarital counseling: the clergy,

physicians, and groups sponsored by institutions, churches, or a collection of professionals.

Stahmann and Barclay-Copes' research (1977:296) shows that three major professional groups provide most premarital counseling. They are: (i) the clergy, (ii) physicians, and (iii) professionals in clinics and agencies. Of these three groups of providers, the clergy and physicians tend to see people who are preparing for marriage and are going about their planning with positive anticipation. The third group, on the other hand, professionals in mental health clinics and agencies, probably see mostly a clientele who are uncomfortable about their wedding plans, or couples who are having difficulty deciding if they should marry, or couples in which one or both parties have been married and are concerned that their second marriage might not work out.

Historically, the clergy have probably been in the business of premarital counseling longer than any others (Stahmann and Barclay-Cope, 1977). However, Mudd (1957) and Bernstein (1977) point out that both the medical and the legal professionals have a potential contribution to make. Mudd (1957:128) states:

The doctor has the greatest opportunity at present in our culture for firsthand premarital exploration and guidance.

Bernstein (1977:416) states:

Few couples enter into realistic premarital legal counseling with their attorney, nor is this recommended by their family counselor. The need for premarital legal counseling becomes increasingly important as each individual's status becomes affected by the complexity of the law and the involvement of one's personal family situation and finances. Premarital legal counseling is essential to the young

and to middle aged people with grown children to protect, estates to be divided, and a future to be insured.

With an antenuptial agreement entered into prior to the marriage for protection of property, children, and future estates the parties can marry with fewer tensions and more openness (Bernstein, 1977).

Formats for Premarital Counseling

Premarital counseling is done in a number of ways: conjoint sessions with the single couple or a group of couples; small groups; large groups; inter-disciplinary team teaching with professionals or paraprofessionals; lectures and discussions; films; slide-presentations; testing; study-guides; video taping; psychodrama and, community-based individual/group designed premarital programs for the handicapped and the developmentally disabled (Walker, 1977).

Content of Premarital Counseling

Stahmann and Hiebert (1977) view the premarital counseling process as a two-part process: the content, and the relationship. Content is understood as the subject matter and focus of the interaction; relationship is what happens between the couple(s) and the counselor while they are relating. A comprehensive list of pertinent topic areas are suggested for appropriate examination based on consideration of the couple's needs, the counselor's own approach and the needs and context of the counseling setting. Suggestions by the authors include: (i) parental modeling; (ii) individual personality differences; (iii) commu-

nication; and (iv) interpersonal dimensions. These will be briefly outlined here:

Parental Modeling: helping couples to recognize and grow beyond parental models of assumed correctness in six areas: (i) demonstration and expectations of affection; (ii) use of alcohol and drugs; (iii) individual and/or couple socialization; (iv) money and its use; (v) discipline guidelines and assumptions for children; and (vi) expectations and practices of religion.

Individual Personality Differences: (i) identifying socialization needs of each; (ii) extraversion and introversion; (iii) peace-keeping parameters; (iv) dependence vs independence; (v) conventional versus nonconventional thinking and cultural values; (vi) low versus high energy level differences; (vii) self-esteem; and (viii) ways of facing depression and anxiety.

Communication: verbal; non-verbal. (How anger is viewed, expressed and handled; apologies; speaking and listening; self information capacities focused on expression of thoughts, feelings and intentions).

Interpersonal Dimensions: (i) friends/social; (ii) geography; (iii) religion-values; (iv) activities; (v) budget; (vi) affectional-sexual; (vii) in-laws/parents; (viii) children; (ix) roles; and (x) health.

Stahmann and Hiebert view the second part of the counseling process as the relationship, which is significant because the premarital counse-

lor is regarded by couples as a resource person, facilitator for new behavior and interaction, and a bridge for trouble spots in the future marriage relationship (Stahmann and Hiebert, 1977).

Genne (1968:5) sees the educational context of premarital counseling as those experiences, usually in a group setting, where persons are enabled and equipped to confront and accomplish life's tasks. Counseling has its focus on the individual, couple or family who is experiencing some difficulty in making a required decision or completing a task. This author's understanding places education and counseling, not in opposition or isolation, but rather in a continuity of continual preparation for, and support in, the living of life.

The review of literature shows a variety of topics and sub-topics are used in premarital counseling programs. Matheson (1977) emphasizes that the needs, feelings and attitudes of those coming for counseling are much more important than the content.

Clinebell (1977) believes that growth in the various facets of a relationship, including the religious dimension, will be more likely to occur if a couple participates in a preparation for marriage workshop or retreat. Clinebell includes several major areas as important for any program. Topic areas include: (i) communication about spiritual beliefs and issues; (ii) values clarification and reformulation; (iii) inner renewal; (iv) mixed religious marriages; (v) contracting on religious issues; and (vi) preparation for remarriage (which includes completion of grief work related to past relationships).

The Whiteheads consider that one appropriate component to include in the educational rites of passage into marriage is education in the skills of communication that are crucial to a lasting relationship. The authors state (1980:134):

The skills of communication do not magically abolish conflict or do away with all difficulties between us, but they help us deal gracefully with these problems when they do arise.

To some, these skills still seem to be secular techniques, not quite fitting for the Church to include in its ministry. In such an understanding the faith community is left to exhort and encourage but has few practical ways to equip its marrying members for the challenging journey ahead. When we can envision the skills of listening, empathy and assertion as Christian virtues we will begin to develop ways to include these practical and powerful tools in our marriage preparation programs.

Spencer (1977:363) suggests four basic topics he considers must be included in the sexual-affectional component of any premarital counseling program. Areas are: (i) topics related to the biology and function of the human sexual system; (ii) information and discussion of the basic sexual response and sexual act; (iii) basic information on family planning and contraception; and (iv) integration of the above information into the attitudes and value system of the premarital couple.

Clark (1977:351) speaks of the premarital examination in terms that include history, gynecological and urological examination, the usual state-required laboratory work, an offer of conferences with the bride and groom that will include concerns about the examination, anatomical and medical considerations, sexual counseling, child-bearing considerations, birth control or contraception, and a follow-up conference.

Williams (1959) and Satir (1972) among others, consider the influence of family of origin on new marriages. Williams (1959:39) postulates that preparation for marriage begins before birth. Fortunate is the person born into a home where the parents are happy in their own relationship with each other. No person, he believes, brings to his/her own marriage simply what they seem to be at the moment of marriage. Each brings what he/she has become through their reaction to and use of all the hurts and helps that have been a part of their experience.

Satir (1972) reflects that behind every married couple are two sets of parents that have provided each member with a type of "family blueprint".

In relationship counseling, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Framo, (1965) state that the personal history that each member brings to the marriage will affect the quality, direction, dynamics and depth of the relationship. Past relations with parents, feelings about family members, and behavior patterns developed in the family of origin are strong determinants of present attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and expectations.

Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1982:53) consider a number of developmental tasks that must be mastered in the beginning stage of the premarital dyad if the newly forming marital system is to survive. The authors state:

If anyone thinks of the formation of a premarital dyad as the first stage in the development of a living family system, one becomes aware of its critical nature.

Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1982) view the formation of a premarital dyad as the first stage in the development of a living family system. In their work with engaged and cohabiting couples, they use the concept of family developmental tasks as a guide for selecting a number of broad content areas that workshop participants are asked to consider as part of the premarital counseling process. Each content area is comprised of structural and process tasks which both participants must negotiate and resolve in order to build a viable dyadic system.

Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1981:18) draw on Duvall's (1971) outline of developmental tasks which newly married couples need to master and overcome in the beginning stage of the relationship if the newly marital system is to survive. Some of these are: (i) preparing for the physical maintenance of the couple; (ii) securing, allocating and planning the use of financial resources; (iii) devising patterns of authority and control; (iv) arranging for the assignment of familial roles and tasks; (v) developing a mutually satisfying sexual relationship; (vi) establishing a system of intellectual and emotional communication; (vii) establishing a workable relationship with relatives and friends; (viii) planning for a family, if desired, and (ix) evolving patterns of decision making, problem solving and conflict negotiation.

Each content area also includes a number of subissues for discussion, (e.g. How will marital responsibilities (roles and tasks) be allocated? Who will do the cleaning, shopping, banking, repairs? etc.) To facili-

tate these discussions, the couples are taught functional communication skills. This is the first process task that each couple must master before proceeding on to the next phase of training.

On successful completion of this requirement, couples are taught collaborative problem solving strategies, conflict negotiation techniques and contingency contracting as a way to arrive at fair and equitable marital exchanges. Participants are taught the use of these skills in addition to communication training, because the authors believe that communication skills, by themselves, are not sufficient to equip couples with the tools needed to resolve their differences successfully.

Once this second group of process tasks is completed, couples are ready to discuss and negotiate their differences in these and other content areas of married life where difficulties frequently arise, particularly during the early stages of relationship development. Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1982:54) state:

The mutually satisfying resolution of these issues in the dyadic phase of family formation is crucial to the successful resolution of successive developmental tasks, because they represent the foundation upon which a viable family system is built.

and that (1982:62):

Negotiating differences in these eight topic areas is the central thrust of the premarital counseling process as we conceptualize it. The counselor's role is to help couples resolve differences if they can and recognize where differences cannot be resolved or negotiated.

The final phase of the process is devoted to having couples reevaluate their decision to marry. They are asked to review those subissues where they were unable to reconcile their differences, to evaluate their importance and to think about the possible difficulties that these unresolved differences might present in the future.

The model presented by Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1982) represents the first attempt to tie premarital intervention to theories of family development and family intervention. The authors state (1981:18):

Finally, premarital programs should afford couples the opportunity to evaluate and reconsider whether they are suited for each other and whether they believe they can build a satisfying relationship together.

Foley's observations (1981:470) about the family system can aptly be applied to premarital couples. He states:

Emotional needs can be reduced to three dimensions: intimacy, power, and meaning. People need to be close to others, to belong. They also need to express themselves, to be unique. Finally there must be some meaning or purpose in their lives.

The important difference between a functional family system (marital dyad) and a dysfunctional one is not the presence or absence of conflict, but rather the attainment of need satisfaction. In either case, there will be conflict in the family. Such conflict should be expected because the goals of various people or subsystems in the family rarely coincide. A functioning family (couple) will make compromises: a dysfunctional family (couple) will not. The issues that ultimately are critical are those of closeness, self-expression, and meaning, especially meaning.

The Whiteheads, in their book Marrying Well (1982) speak of marriage as a journey more than an institution; as such it involves certain psychological transitions: mutuality, self-possession, self-transcendence. The rites of passage from the state of being single to being married, even when they go well, still involve some pain and anxiety: a sense of separation from a person's familiar ways and life-style, a period of feeling "marginal", the experience of a sense of loss over what has been left behind and the unfamiliarity with what each spouse now faces.

Finally, a period of reincorporation when both have come through the passage, and a new stage of life begins. The Whiteheads' (1981:123) reflect:

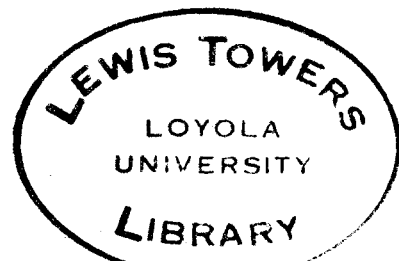
Human communities have always structured rites of passage to assist their members through these life transitions. In times of change or of danger and confusion--as in birth, or death, or coming to adulthood--a community was called to one of its essential roles: to make sense of what confuses the individual and to support the person through this vulnerable time.

Passages are not to be navigated alone. The experience and wisdom of a community are needed to help tame the distress and even terror of these times. In its rites of passage a community acts to protect and to predict: it protects the individual from the danger and disorientation of this life transition; it also predicts--in story, symbol and ritual--that the person will come through successfully.

Process of Premarital Counseling

In formulating a model for delivery of premarital counseling services, Shonick (1975:322) found that the existing literature provided surprisingly few guidelines. She reports that the model developed in the Community Health Services focuses primarily on communication and education rather than upon treatment. While the program emphasizes the importance of communication and expectations, it explores important areas of daily living such as plans for future work and education, family life, sexuality, family planning, parenting, and use of leisure time.

The majority of the premarital counseling programs reviewed by Bagarozzi and Rauen (1981:15) specify improved communication skills between



partners as a desired outcome. However, Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1982:62) report that:

What these program designers failed to recognize is that although open and clear communication has been found to correlate positively with marital satisfaction (Lewis & Spanier, 1979), communication training by itself does not teach couples how to negotiate conflict, resolve differences, problem solve, and make the structural changes in their relationship that are required to alter dysfunctional interaction patterns.

Whitlock (1961:263) encourages the use of dreams in the usual premarital counseling relationships. She states:

In such situations where clients are able to reflect on their feelings about their dreams, the important factor seems to be the helpfulness of the reflections. If the correctness of the interpretation is crucial in order to prevent any premature closure, then the use of dreams in premarital counseling would seem to be limited to the expert.

Clinebell (1977:319) suggests several approaches which have proved effective for pastoral counselors. They include setting up premarriage groups with married couples to serve as catalysts and resource persons by sharing their struggles and satisfactions in marriage; by conducting a series of four to six weekly 2/3-hour sessions involving short didactic segments and longer experiential segments using structured communication relationship-strengthening exercises.

Schneider (1985) introduced his parish couples to the Catholic Engaged Encounter, a weekend experience accomodating 20 to 25 couples. According to the author the program is one of the finest marriage preparation programs he has experienced. A year later Schneider added Eve-

nings for Engaged Couples (Sadlier Publishers), a program of six weekly sessions given to small groups of engaged couples held in the home of a married couple. Still the need was felt, to carry the opportunities for open communication a step farther. Schneider (1985:6) states:

The new option we developed was different from the others because each married couple worked in their own home with only one engaged couple at a time. We chose as a basic text Bill and Patty Coleman's Only Love Can Make It Easy (Twenty-Third Publications)). We called the five-session program of informal discussion Couple-to-Couple. It is certainly one of the most challenging and effective forms of marriage preparation.

The Couple-to-Couple program is now organized on a diocesan-wide basis at Norwich, Connecticut.

The review of literature did not help determine if one method of premarital counseling was preferred or used over others. However, the small group setting for brief durations of time seemed the most widely used (Matheson, 1977). Factors influencing the method, Matheson suggests are: setting, staff, training, available materials, theoretical orientation, available time, finances, motivation of the couple, needs of the couple, and amount of time prior to the actual wedding.

Effectiveness of Premarital Counseling

Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman (1976:9) state:

Formal methods for achieving these ends (effective facilitation of couples' preparation for marriage) traditionally include individual and conjoint premarital counseling services, functional marriage classes at colleges and universities, topical lecture series, and small group discussions which often include role-playing and encounter techniques.

The authors agree that few programs have attempted to teach specific behavior which engaged couples can utilize during and after their transition into marriage.

Mace (1972:20) suggests that marriage be seen as a task, as a goal that is difficult to attain but not unattainable. He states:

'We are in love, and that will take care of everything' is a very dangerous philosophy. Marriage is demanding. It calls for intelligence and effort and maturity and patience to achieve the rewards it has to offer. Sometimes, also, it requires outside help, the guidance and support of a skilled counselor.

Rutledge (1966) states that premarital counseling is one of the most effective teachable moments or opportunities for learning. He further indicates that it is one of the best educational and clinical opportunities in the life of a person (Matheson, 1977).

Olson (1983:67) states:

While premarital couples are theoretically at a 'teachable moment' in terms of helping them learn a great deal about themselves and each other, in practice they represent a 'tough nut to crack'. Any effective premarital program must, therefore, help them become more aware of their relationship issues and motivate them to begin working early before their problems become too serious.

Olson (1983:68) further states:

The most intensive and effective type of premarital counseling for couples includes structured communication and skill-building programs, but these are rarely offered or used by premarital couples. Because of the lack of trainers and inability to involve premarital couples, these programs are used by only 1 percent of couples before marriage.

Olson (1983) reviewed a number of systematic studies over the last five years which investigated the effectiveness of various approaches for helping premarital couples. These studies give evidence that large lecture courses for groups of couples are not an effective way of helping premarital couples, no matter how well the lectures are presented. The lecture format (i) discourages most couples from considering future marriage enrichment programs; (ii) decreases couples' willingness to go to marriage counseling if marriage problems occurred in their relationship; and (iii) the lectures tend to disappoint rather than excite couples in terms of the need for and value of future marriage enrichment and counseling. These same studies show that using some type of premarital inventory, such as PREPARE, is an effective way to involve couples in a meaningful dialogue with each other before marriage.

Bagarozzi and Rauen (1981:27) reviewed all the premarital counseling programs in the United States which outlined standardized intervention procedures and utilized dependent measures to assess whether or not the programs were effective. They found thirteen programs that met these criteria. In general, they discovered the premarital counseling programs to be atheoretical in their approach to intervention, loosely designed and non-specific as to their goals. The authors conclude from their study that:

Although premarital counseling programs are on the rise in the United States, no empirical data exists to support the notion that these programs reduce the incidence of divorce or separation for those couples who participate, because the follow-up evaluations which have been conducted thus far have not allowed sufficient time to elapse after treatment to obtain a valid measure of their effec-

tiveness. Similarly, no data exist which indicate that couples who participate in premarital counseling programs are more satisfied or successful in their marriages than those who do not. In addition, no data were found to help know whether premarital counseling practices serve any prophylactic functions; for example, do they prevent bad marriages from taking place?"

The authors urge individuals who conduct premarital counseling programs to make a concerted effort to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs. In addition to methodological weaknesses found in their survey, research in premarital counseling was found to suffer from a number of conceptual inadequacies, the most frequent being the program designers' failure to articulate a theory of family process and/or family development which served as a rationale for the selection of program contents and procedures. Drawing on Speer's insight, Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1982:53) state that:

For any premarital intervention program to be successful it must be guided by a theory of family intervention which insures the development of those structural characteristics that are essential for the maintenance and stability of any living system. Similarly, a premarital intervention program must provide for the development of interactive processes within the system which contribute to its growth and viability.

None of the studies reviewed by Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1982) was able to demonstrate that it was successful in producing long term changes in participants' behaviors, attitudes, affects, etc. or that it reduced the frequency of separations and divorces for program participants, because control groups were rarely employed and long-term follow-up evaluations were not undertaken. Regarding their own model of premarital intervention that attempts to tie premarital counseling to

recognized theories of family development and family intervention, Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi (1982:62) state that:

Only rigorous testing and long-term follow-up evaluations will be able to shed some light on whether it (the development model) can help participants build more satisfactory relationships than control couples who have not had the benefit of premarital counseling. Similarly, only longitudinal studies can help us determine whether couples who decide not to marry, as a result of engaging in premarital counseling, do build more satisfying marriages with different partners than control couples who marry their original partners.

In addition to evaluating the long-term effects of premarital counseling programs, one also must question whether their short-term goals are relevant and meaningful.

Finally, Olson (1975:15) concludes from his studies that:

In spite of all the predictions regarding the collapse of the institution of marriage, it continues to survive. In fact, marriage still continues to be the most popular voluntary institution in our society with only 3 to 4 percent of the population never marrying at least once.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This survey focuses on the Premarital Institute's past participants' perceived degrees of helpfulness which they gained from participation in the Institute's program. The following sections describe the Program's setting, the selection of the subjects, the instrument developed for use in this survey and the procedures adopted for the collection and treatment of the data.

Setting of Premarital Institute's Program

For two decades the Pastoral Care Division at Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge, Illinois, has offered to the general public premarital education/counseling through its Premarital Institute. Since 1972 the Premarital Institute has conducted six four-week sessions each year.

These sessions, intended for couples preparing for marriage, consist of a three-hour input of discussions and presentations of topics related to the intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual aspects of marital relationship. These sessions are organized and conducted by the hospital's interdisciplinary personnel. As an ecumenical program, it is open to all. From 1980 to 1984 the average annual attendance is 118 participants, that is, approximately 20 individuals per session.

The underlying philosophy of the Premarital Institute is that marriage preparation is not only necessary but is one of life's most serious and important preparations. For this reason, the Institute's specific goals are as follows:

(i) to provide premarital couples with useful information in the areas of potential conflict: finance, faith, fidelity, and family frustrations;

(ii) to facilitate premarital couples constructive communication, conversation, and conflict management; and

(iii) to provide a Christian context for couples to prepare themselves for marriage.

Selection of the Subjects

The subjects included in this survey were those who had attended the Premarital Institute from 1980-1984 inclusive. At the time of their attendance the participants at the Institute had agreed to take part in any follow-up study conducted by the Institute by leaving their name and forwarding address.

A total of 594 individuals or 297 couples intending to marry have attended the Institute from 1980-1984. At the time of attendance all participants lived in the Illinois region, with most coming from the north/northwest Chicago suburbs. All 297 couples were invited to participate in the survey.

As the type of participant (class of employment, educational, religious background, and the previous and present marital status, etc.) was unknown to the researcher, a demographic section was included in the survey's instrument in order to establish a descriptive identity of those who have participated in the Institute's program. The demographic data of the participants will be presented at the beginning of Chapter IV.

Instrument

A survey instrument was developed to obtain data on various aspects to be included in assessing the effectiveness of the existing program of the Premarital Institute at Lutheran General Hospital.

Item Selection

The items were formulated on the basis of the four dimensions of the program intended for couples preparing to marry. After a list of potential items were compiled, four educational advisors were asked to screen the items for clarity, as well as to examine and edit each item for structure and duplication. Items which were considered by the editors to be unclear in either structure or content were either reworded or discarded.

Validation of the Instrument

The survey instrument was validated in two ways. First, the questionnaire was distributed to be completed by the March, 1985 couple participants of the Institute. This group is not included in the final survey. This pilot group completed the questionnaire in fifteen minutes. Slight changes were made in terms of content and clarity following the completion of the questionnaire by the pilot group.

Secondly, on the recommendations of the four advisors the questions related to each of the four aspects in Part II were distributed in intervals of five, for example, the emotional-related questions were distributed in the following sequence: 10, 14, 18, 22, 26. Part I demographic items and the additional comment items of Part III were virtually unaltered (see Appendices B, C, D).

Collection and Treatment of the Data

A covering letter (see Appendix A), two copies of the questionnaire (one for each couple-member) and two self-addressed, stamped envelopes (one for each couple-member) were sent to all 297 couples who had attended the Institute from 1980-1984. Couple members were requested to return the completed questionnaire within the week of receiving it. The Institute accepted completed questionnaires up to three weeks of mailing date. Of the letters sent to 297 couples 53 were returned with address unknown, 151 couples did not reply, and 153 couple-member replies (rep-

representing one or both members of 93 couples) were returned completed. A total of 67 replies from male members and a total of 86 replies from female members were received which made for a return total of 25.8 percent. The 153 completed questionnaires provided the data for the stated purpose of this study.

Past participants were asked to complete a thirty-six item questionnaire which was divided into three parts. Part I consisted of nine items of personal demographic data. Part II, consisting of twenty-two items, asked past participants to rank on a 1-5 Likert-type scale the degree of perceived helpfulness that they received from the Institute's program. The scale enabled participants to respond to five categories for each question ranging from 1 (Not At All Helpful) to 5 (Very Helpful). Part III, consisting of four items, invited past participants to offer additional comments about the Premarital Institute's program. These comments are intended primarily as feedback for the ongoing development of the Institute's program.

The data for each question were collated according to year, tallied according to number of responses for each year, and number totals were converted to percentage totals which were used as a base for comparative analysis. The results are presented in tabular and narrative form in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Presentation and Analyses of the Data

Introduction

The findings and analyses of the data regarding the four aspects of the Institute's premarital program offered by the Pastoral Care Division at Lutheran General Hospital are presented in this chapter. Since the survey was divided into three parts, the examination and analyses of the data will follow this same three-part division. Hence, Part I will present, examine and analyze the personal demographic data (Questions 1-9) in tabular and narrative form. A descriptive summary will conclude Part I. Part II survey results to questions 10-29, dealing with the Likert-type scale statements will be presented, examined, and analyzed next. Since Part III items were included for the purposes of the Premarital Institute's ongoing program development, and are not part of this study per se, the results are appended in Appendices C and D. The findings and analyses for each part are presented in a tabular and narrative format throughout this chapter.

Examination and Analyses of the
Personal Demographic Data
Questions 1-9, Part I

The purpose of the personal demographic data was to establish the sex, educational background, previous and present status, religious affiliation, employment, and type of professional counseling, if any, of the participants.

A total of 153 individuals responded: 67 males and 86 females as Table I shows:

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS 1 & 3: SEX OF PAST PARTICIPANTS
AND YEAR OF ATTENDANCE. RESPONSES ARE SHOWN IN
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE TOTALS

NO. OF		RESPONDENTS	
INDIVIDUAL		FOR EACH YEAR	
YEAR	PARTICIPANTS	MALE	FEMALE

1980	128	7	10
		5.5	7.8
1981	116	10	14
		8.6	12.0
1982	90	11	12
		12.2	13.3
1983	132	14	21
		10.6	15.9
1984	128	25	29
		19.5	22.6

TOTAL	594	67	86
%	100	11.3	14.5

TABLE 1 shows that 153 individuals responded to the questionnaire, 67 males and 86 females. In percentage terms the overall number of responses is 25.8 percent. The table also shows that the percentage of responses to the survey is the highest for 1984, that is, one year following participation in the Premarital Institute's program. It is lowest from respondents of five years ago. The percentage of female responses is higher than male responses for each of the five years.

TABLE 2

DEMOGRAPHIC ITEM 2: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION
ACHIEVED BY THE PAST PARTICIPANTS SHOWN
IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE TOTALS

		COMPLETED		COLLEGE			
PARTICIPANTS	HIGH	YEAR:		GRADUATE			
1980-1984	SCHOOL	1	2	3	4	SCHOOL	

Males	(67)	22	5	8	1	22	9
%		32.8	7.5	12.0	1.5	32.8	13.4
Females	(86)	21	8	16	6	20	15
%		24.4	9.3	18.6	7.0	23.2	17.5

TOTAL		43	13	24	7	42	24
%		28.1	8.5	15.7	4.6	27.4	15.7

TABLE 2 shows that a total of 43 respondents (28.1%) completed high school and 42 respondents (27.4%) completed four years of college education. Of the respondents 15.7 percent hold a degree beyond college level. Slightly more males than females hold a college degree whereas more females than males have graduate school education.

Demographic Item 4 inquired about the previous marital status, that is, the status of the participants at the time of attending the Premarital Institute's program.

TABLE 3

DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS 4 & 5: PREVIOUS AND PRESENT
MARITAL STATUS OF THE PARTICIPANTS, 1980-1984.

PREVIOUS STATUS				
Single	Cohabiting	Divorced	Married	Separated
123	16	13	1	0

PRESENT STATUS				
Single	Cohabiting	Divorced	Married	Separated
4	0	2	147	0

TABLE 3 shows that 123 respondents (80%) were single at the time of attendance. The status of the remaining 20 percent of the participants was that of cohabiting, divorced, and married. Since attending the program, 147 (96.0%) of the respondents have married, four are now single and two are divorced, as shown in the above table.

Demographic Item 6 asked the participants to state whether they are presently married to the partner with whom they attended the Institute.

TABLE 4

DEMOGRAPHIC ITEM 6: PRESENTLY MARRIED
TO PAST PARTICIPANT PARTNER

	YES	NO
	146	7

TOTAL %	95.0	5.0

Of the respondents 95 percent are presently married to the partner with whom they attended the Institute and 5 percent are not.

Demographic Item 7 asked the participants to state their religious affiliation.

TABLE 5

DEMOGRAPHIC ITEM 7: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF
PARTICIPANTS SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES.

	LUTHERAN	CATHOLIC	METHODIST	OTHER	NONE
TOTAL	74	31	9	30	9
%	48.3	20.3	5.9	19.6	5.9

TABLE 5 shows that almost one-half of the respondents (48.3%) were Lutheran; Catholics numbered 20.3 percent (31 respondents) and Methodists numbered 5.9 percent (9 respondents). Thirty respondents (19.6%) stated a religious affiliation other than Lutheran, Catholic and Methodist. Nine respondents stated no religious affiliation.

Demographic Item 8 asked the participants to state their employment.

TABLE 6

DEMOGRAPHIC ITEM 8: EMPLOYMENT OF PARTICIPANTS SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE TOTALS.

PARTICIPANTS	BLUE-	WHITE-	NO
	COLLAR	COLLAR	RESPONSE

Male (67)	18	46	3
	27.0	69.0	4.0
Female (86)	15	69	2
	17.4	80.2	2.2

TOTAL (153)	33	115	5
%	21.6	75.2	3.2
=====			

TABLE 6 shows that the majority of the respondents (75.2%) were white-collar workers. There were 1.5 times more female white-collar workers than male white-collar workers. Less than one-quarter of the respondents (21.6%) were blue-collar workers and five respondents gave no response to this question of employment.

Demographic Item 9 asked the participants to state the type of professional counseling, if any, received prior to or at the time of attendance at the Premarital Institute.

TABLE 7

DEMOGRAPHIC ITEM 9: PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING

		INDI- PRE-		DIVORCE			
PARTICIPANTS		VIDUAL	MARITAL	MARITAL	FAMILY	MEDIATION	OTHER

Male	(14)	3	5	2	1	0	3
Female	(28)	12	6	6	1	2	1

TOTAL	42	15	11	8	2	2	4
%	27.4	9.8	7.2	5.2	1.3	1.3	2.6
=====							

TABLE 7 shows that forty-two (27.4%) of the respondents made use of professional counseling either prior to or at the time of attendance at the Institute. The number of females was twice that of males. Fifteen of the forty-two respondents had been or were currently in individual counseling.

Summary

The results of the personal demographic data reveal the following points:

1. The highest percentage number of responses were received from the 1984 participants, with decreasing numbers for each of the retrospective years. More females than males responded.
2. All the respondents had at least completed high school and of those who continued their education 43.1 percent had advanced to the completion of four years of college or beyond.
3. Eighty percent of the participants were single at the time of attendance and 95 percent of the participants had subsequently married the partner with whom they attended the Premarital Institute.
4. Participants were primarily of the Christian religion with most affiliated to the Lutheran denomination.
5. Seventy-five percent of the participants were white-collar workers.
6. Forty-two of the respondents had made use of professional counseling either prior to or at the time of attendance at the Premarital Institute.

The following section will examine and analyze in tabular and narrative form the results of Part II.

Examination and Analyses
of Likert Scale
Questions 10-29, Part II

The Likert Scale statements dealt with four aspects of Premarital Counseling- emotional, social, physical, and spiritual- that were discussed in the marriage preparation sessions conducted by the Premarital Institute. Five questions relating to the degree of helpfulness to past participants on each of the four aspects were asked: questions 10, 14, 18, 22, 26 on the Emotional aspect; questions 11, 15, 19, 23, 27 on the Social aspect; questions 12, 16, 20, 24, 28 on the Physical aspect; and questions 13, 17, 21, 25, 29 on the Spiritual aspect as shown in the following analyses.

The participants of these sessions were asked to rate on a 1-5 Likert-type scale their perceptions on the degree of helpfulness received.

The following examination and analyses will deal with each of the four aspects in a two-fold manner:

1. by treating individually the five responses that pertain to its related aspect. Each of the five responses relating to the particular aspect of the program will be presented, examined and analyzed in tabular and narrative format; and

2. then by summarizing each of the four aspects as a whole. For purposes of comparison and to facilitate management of the data the categories 1 (Not at all Helpful) and 2 (Not Very Helpful) have been combined into one category entitled "Not Helpful". Likewise, categories 4 (Somewhat Helpful) and 5 (Very Helpful) have been combined into one category entitled "Helpful". The "Neutral" category remains.

Question 10

How did the discussions help me to be more aware of my own values, needs, and feelings? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 8

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 10

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	0	1	9	7	0
1981	3	1	12	7	1
1982	1	2	12	9	0
1983	1	1	8	18	7
1984	2	3	8	30	11

TOTAL	7	8	49	70	19
%	4.6	5.2	32.0	45.8	12.4

Seventy of the 153 respondents (45.2%) to question 10 considered that the discussions on the awareness of their own values, needs, and feelings to be "somewhat helpful". A further 12.4 percent considered that the discussions were "very helpful". In effect, this means that more than half of the respondents (58.2%) considered that these discussions were helpful. Only ten percent (15 respondents) considered the discussion of one's own values, needs, and feelings, as not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". The remaining forty-nine respondents (32.0%) rated the discussions as "neutral" in being helpful.

Question 14

How did the discussions help me to be more aware of my partner's values, needs and feelings? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 9

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 14

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	0	1	4	8	4
1981	1	0	6	11	6
1982	0	1	6	13	3
1983	1	2	2	18	12
1984	0	4	0	28	21
TOTAL	2	8	18	78	47
%	1.3	5.2	11.8	51.0	30.7

Seventy-eight of the 153 respondents to question 14 considered that the discussion on the awareness of their partners' values, needs and feelings, were "somewhat helpful". A further 30.7 percent considered that the discussions were "very helpful". In effect, this means that slightly more than four-fifths (81.7%) considered that these discussions were "very helpful". By contrast, less than 7 percent considered the discussions on the awareness of their partner's values, needs and feelings as not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". Only 11.8 percent rated the discussions as "neutral" in being helpful.

Question 18

How did the discussions help me to express clearly my own values, needs and feelings? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 10

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 18

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	1	3	11	1
1981	2	3	9	10	0
1982	0	1	7	11	4
1983	2	2	6	16	9
1984	1	3	6	26	18
TOTAL	6	10	31	74	32
%	3.9	6.6	20.3	48.3	20.9

Table 10 shows that seventy-four of the 153 respondents (51.6%) considered the discussions to be "somewhat helpful" in the expression of their own values, needs and feelings. A further 32 respondents (20.9%) considered that the discussions were "very helpful". This means that 69.2 percent of the total number of respondents considered the discussions as helpful in the expression of their own values, needs and feelings. Fewer than 11 percent (10.5%) of the responses show that the discussions were not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". One-fifth (20.3%) of the responses show a "neutral" stand in this question.

Question 22

How did the discussions help me to hear accurately my partner's expression of his/her values? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 11

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 22

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	0	3	11	2
1981	0	0	6	14	3
1982	0	1	11	9	2
1983	2	1	5	16	11
1984	0	4	9	29	13

TOTAL	3	6	34	79	31
%	2.0	3.9	22.2	51.6	20.3

Table 11 shows that seventy-nine of the 153 respondents (51.6%) to question 22 considered that the discussions on hearing accurately their partner's expression of values to be "somewhat helpful". A further 31 respondents (20.3%) considered that the discussions were "very helpful". In effect, this means that 71.9 percent, some 110 of the respondents, considered that these discussions were helpful. Fewer than 6 percent (5.9%) considered that the discussions on hearing accurately their partner's expression of values as not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". Slightly more than one-fifth (22.2%) of the respondents rated the discussions as "neutral" in being helpful.

Question 26

How did the discussions help me to create the emotional climate in my marriage that I consider growthful? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 12

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 26

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	0	7	9	0
1981	1	2	9	11	1
1982	0	1	9	13	0
1983	2	2	11	13	7
1984	0	3	11	26	14
TOTAL	4	8	47	72	22
%	2.6	5.2	30.7	47.1	14.4

TABLE 12 shows that seventy-two of the 153 respondents (47.1%) to question 26 considered that the discussions on the creation of an emotional climate in marriage which they considered growthful to be "somewhat helpful". A further 22 respondents (14.4%) considered the discussions as "very helpful". In effect, this means that slightly less than two-thirds (61.5%) considered that these discussions were helpful. In contrast, fewer than 8 percent (7.8%) of the respondents considered the discussions as not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful" in creating the emotional climate in marriage conducive to growth. Close to one-third (30.7%) of the respondents rated the discussions as "neutral" in this matter.

Summary of the Emotional-Related Questions

The individual questions (#10, 14, 18, 22, 26) on the emotional aspects discussed at the Premarital Institute are summarized in TABLE 13 as follows:

TABLE 13

SUMMARY OF PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO THE
EMOTIONAL-RELATED QUESTIONS (1980-1984)
SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE TOTALS.

NO. OF RESPONSES = 765

TOPIC	(1) NOT AT ALL HELPFUL	(2) NOT VERY HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL 1 & 2 COMBINED	(3) NEUTRAL	(4) SOME- WHAT HELPFUL	(5) VERY HELPFUL	HELPFUL 4 & 5 COMBINED
Awareness of one's needs and feelings	7 4.6	8 5.2	15 9.8	49 32.0	70 45.8	19 12.4	89 58.2
Awareness of partner's values, needs and feelings	2 1.3	8 5.2	10 6.5	18 11.8	78 51.0	47 30.7	125 81.7
Clear express- ion of one's values, needs and feelings	6 3.9	10 6.6	16 10.5	31 20.3	74 48.3	32 20.9	106 81.2
Hearing partner's expression of values	3 2.6	6 3.9	9 5.9	34 22.2	79 51.6	31 20.3	110 71.9
Creation of emotional climate for growth	4 2.6	8 5.2	12 7.8	47 30.7	72 47.1	22 14.4	94 61.5
TOTAL %	22 2.9	40 5.2	62 8.1	179 23.4	373 48.7	151 19.8	524 68.5

TABLE 13 shows that more than two-thirds of the respondents (68.5%) found the discussions pertaining to the emotional-related questions to be "helpful". In contrast, a very small minority (8.1%) found them "not helpful". Two questions dealt with the awareness of values, needs and feelings from one's own perspective and from that of the partner. It is interesting to note that the help received on being aware of the partner's values, needs and feelings rated higher (81.7%) than the help received about one's own awareness of values, needs and feelings (58.2%).

The discussions on hearing accurately the partner's expression of values were rated as the second most important helpful topic (71.9%). This result, like the one mentioned above, reflects a heightened attentiveness to the partner rather than to oneself.

Four questions focused on awareness of oneself or one's partner and all ranked highly as "helpful". The remaining question which dealt with the creating of an emotional climate for growth was perceived as being less helpful (61.5%) than those which focused on oneself or the partner.

The two questions, one about the awareness of one's values, needs and feelings, and the other about the creating of the emotional climate for growth in marriage were given the two lowest ratings in the category of "helpful", 58.2 percent and 61.5 percent respectively. These same two questions were ranked highest in the "neutral" category, 32 percent and 30.7 percent.

In summary form, TABLE 13 on the emotional-related topics can be set out as follows:

Helpful	68.5%
---------	-------

Neutral	23.4%
---------	-------

Not Helpful	8.1%
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Question 11

How did the discussions help me to establish a financial policy regarding the saving and spending of money earned? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 14

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 11

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	0	0	4	12	0
1981	6	4	4	7	2
1982	2	3	11	5	2
1983	1	4	8	18	7
1984	4	3	12	21	12
TOTAL	13	15	39	63	23
%	8.5	9.8	25.5	41.2	15.0

TABLE 14 shows that in the discussions on help received to establish financial policy for the saving and spending of money earned sixty-three (41.2%) of the respondents considered them as "somewhat helpful" while another twenty-three respondents (15.0%) considered the discussions as "very helpful". This means that a total of 56.2 percent of the responses show that the discussions were helpful. Some 18 percent of the respondents (18.3%) considered these discussions on the establishment of financial policy as "not helpful". One-quarter of the respondents (25.5%) rated these discussions as "neutral".

Question 15

How did the discussions help me to evaluate what importance leisure time has in our marriage? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 15

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 15

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	0	0	8	7	2
1981	2	1	11	8	2
1982	2	2	10	8	1
1983	4	2	9	15	5
1984	1	4	8	25	16
TOTAL	9	9	46	63	26
%	5.9	5.9	30.0	41.2	17.0

TABLE 15 shows that in the discussions on the evaluation of the importance of leisure time in one's marriage 63 of the respondents (41.2%) considered them as "somewhat helpful". A further 17 percent (26 respondents) considered them as "very helpful". This means that a total of 58.2 percent of the responses show that the discussions were helpful. Slightly fewer than 12 percent (11.8%) of the respondents did not consider the discussions helpful in evaluating the importance that leisure time has in one's marriage. Thirty percent of the respondents (30.0%) rated these discussions as "neutral".

Question 19

How did the discussions help me to be clear about my own and my partner's need for friends of the same and opposite sex? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 16

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 19

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	0	1	5	9	2
1981	1	0	11	11	0
1982	0	3	10	8	2
1983	4	1	7	17	6
1984	3	5	16	20	10

TOTAL	8	11	49	65	20
%	5.2	7.2	32.0	42.5	13.1

TABLE 16 shows that in the discussions on the need for having friends of both sexes for oneself and for one's partner, 65 of the respondents (42.5%) considered the discussions as "somewhat helpful" while a further 13.1 percent (20 respondents) considered the discussions as "very helpful". This means that a total of 55.6 percent of the respondents considered that these discussions were helpful. Some 12 percent (12.4%) considered that the discussions were not helpful. About one-third of the respondents (32%) rated them as "neutral".

Question 23

How did the discussions help me to negotiate the kind, frequency and duration of contact with my own and my partner's relatives? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 17

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 23

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	1	5	10	0
1981	3	2	10	7	2
1982	0	5	12	6	0
1983	3	6	7	14	5
1984	1	4	21	21	7
TOTAL	8	18	55	58	14
%	5.2	11.8	35.9	37.9	9.2

TABLE 17 shows that in the discussions dealing with the areas of the kind, frequency and duration of contact with one's own and with the partner's relatives, 58 of the respondents (37.9%) considered the discussions as "somewhat helpful" and another 14 respondents (9.2%) considered them as "very helpful". This means that a total of 47.1 percent of the respondents considered these discussions as helpful. Seventeen percent (26 respondents) considered the discussions as not helpful. Slightly more than one-third percent (35.9%) rated the discussions as "neutral".

Question 27

How did the discussions help me to address needs created by my own and my partner's work or profession? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 18

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 27

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	0	6	7	3
1981	3	4	7	8	2
1982	1	4	10	5	3
1983	2	3	11	11	8
1984	2	5	17	24	6
TOTAL	9	16	51	55	22
%	5.9	10.5	33.3	35.9	14.4

TABLE 18 shows that in the discussions on help received in addressing the needs created by work or profession for oneself or for one's partner, 55 of the respondents (35.9%) considered the discussions as "somewhat helpful" while another 22 of the respondents (14.4%) considered them as "very helpful". This means that a total of 50.3 percent of the responses show that the discussions were helpful. Some 16 percent (16.4%) considered these discussions as not helpful. One-third of the respondents (33.3%) rated these discussions as "neutral".

Summary of the Social-Related Questions

The individual questions (#11, 15, 19, 23, 27) on the social aspects discussed at the Premarital Institute are summarized in Table 19 as follows:

TABLE 19

SUMMARY OF PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO THE

SOCIAL-RELATED QUESTIONS (1980-1984)

SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE TOTALS.

NO. OF RESPONSES = 765

TOPIC	(1) NOT AT ALL HELPFUL	(2) NOT VERY HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL 1 & 2 COMBINED	(3) NEUTRAL	(4) SOME- WHAT HELPFUL	(5) VERY HELPFUL	HELPFUL 4 & 5 COMBINED
Establishing financial policy of sav- ing/spending	13 8.5	15 9.8	28 18.3	39 25.5	63 41.2	23 15.0	86 56.2
Evaluating need for leisure	9 5.9	9 5.9	18 11.8	46 30.0	63 41.2	26 17.0	89 58.2
Need for friends of same/opposite sex	8 5.2	11 7.2	19 12.4	49 32.0	65 42.5	20 13.1	85 55.6
Negotiating contact with relatives	8 5.2	18 11.8	26 17.0	55 35.9	58 37.9	14 9.2	72 47.1
Addressing needs arising from work/ profession	9 5.9	16 10.5	25 16.4	51 33.3	55 35.9	22 14.4	77 50.3
TOTAL %	47 6.2	69 9.0	116 15.2	240 31.4	304 39.7	105 13.7	409 53.4

TABLE 19 shows that slightly more than one-half of the respondents (53.4%) found the discussions pertaining to the social-related questions to be "helpful". Within the category of "helpful" the results show that these social-related topics can be ranked in a descending order of importance as follows: 1. need for leisure; 2. establishment of a financial policy; 3. need for friends; 4. addressing needs arising from work; and 5. contact with relatives.

In the "not helpful" category (15.2%) the results in a descending order of importance can be ranked as follows: 1. establishment of a financial policy; 2. contact with relatives; 3. addressing needs arising from work; 4. need for friends; and 5. need for leisure.

Almost one-third of the results are rated as "neutral" (31.4%). Within this "neutral" category the greatest difference varies from 35.9 percent for the topic of negotiating contact with relatives to 25.5 percent for that dealing with establishing of financial policy.

In summary form TABLE 19 on the social-related topics can be set out as follows:

Helpful	53.4%
Neutral	31.4%
Not helpful	15.2%

Question 12

How did the discussions help me to understand the place of exercise and nutrition in the making of a healthy marital relationship? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 20

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 12

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	2	1	6	8	0
1981	7	3	5	8	1
1982	4	4	11	2	2
1983	2	5	14	11	3
1984	10	11	20	10	3

TOTAL	25	24	56	39	9
%	16.3	15.7	36.6	25.5	5.9

TABLE 20 shows that for the discussions on help to understand the place of exercise and nutrition in the making of a healthy marital relationship, the results show an almost even split. Sixty-five of the respondents (31.4%) considered the discussions helpful, that is, either "somewhat helpful" or "very helpful". About another one-third of the respondents (32.0%) considered that the discussions were not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful", while 36.6 percent of the respondents rated them as "neutral".

Question 16

How did the discussions help me to understand the hereditary factors which could affect the health of self, partner, or children? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 21

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 16

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	0	5	7	4	1
1981	5	3	11	4	1
1982	2	3	11	5	2
1983	1	6	9	12	7
1984	5	12	18	10	9
TOTAL	13	29	56	35	20
%	8.5	18.9	36.6	22.9	13.1

TABLE 21 shows that for the discussions on help received in the understanding of the heredity factors which could affect the health of self, partner, or children, the results show that thirty-five of the respondents (22.9%) considered them as "somewhat helpful" and a further twenty respondents (13.1%) considered them as "very helpful". This means that a total of thirty-six percent of the respondents considered them as helpful. Slightly more than one-quarter of the respondents (27.4%) considered the discussions as not helpful. The highest number of respondents (56 or 36.6%) rated them as "neutral".

Question 20

How did the discussions help me to express to my partner my fears and concerns related to previous dating, sexual preferences/affairs, marital relationships? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 22

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 20

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	1	8	4	3
1981	3	3	12	5	1
1982	1	3	7	8	4
1983	1	6	9	8	11
1984	2	5	24	17	6

TOTAL	8	18	60	42	25
%	5.2	11.8	39.2	27.5	16.3

TABLE 22 shows that in the discussions on help received in the expression to one's partner of fears, concerns related to previous dating, sexual preferences, affairs, marital relationships, 42 of the respondents (27.5%) considered that the discussions were "somewhat helpful" while another 25 respondents (16.3%) considered them as "very helpful". This means that a total of 43.8 percent of the respondents considered the discussions as helpful. In contrast, 17 percent of the respondents considered the discussions as not being helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". About 40 percent of the respondents (39.2%) rated the discussions as "neutral".

Question 24

How did the discussions help me to discuss my feelings and preferences regarding sexual initiative, expression of affection, need for support and nurturance? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 23

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 24

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDANTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	0	5	10	1
1981	3	0	9	11	1
1982	0	1	12	8	2
1983	2	3	10	12	8
1984	1	6	10	26	11
TOTAL	7	10	46	67	23
%	4.5	6.5	30.0	44.0	15.0

TABLE 23 shows that in the area of help received to discuss with the partner one's feelings and preferences regarding sexual initiative, the expression of affection, need for support and nurturance, 67 of the respondents (44.0%) considered the discussions as "somewhat helpful". A further 23 respondents (15.0%) considered them "very helpful". This means that a total of 59 percent of the respondents considered the discussions as helpful. In contrast, 11 percent (17 respondents) considered the discussions as not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". About than one-third of the respondents (30.0%) rated them as "neutral".

Question 28

How did the discussions help me to negotiate decisions regarding birth control, abortion, and family size? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 24

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 28

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	1	7	7	1
1981	2	4	7	9	2
1982	2	3	9	8	1
1983	2	2	5	18	8
1984	2	5	19	22	6
TOTAL	9	15	47	64	18
%	5.9	9.8	30.7	41.8	11.8

TABLE 24 shows that in the discussions on the negotiating decisions on birth control, abortion, and family size, 64 of the respondents (41.8%) considered these discussions as "somewhat helpful". A further 18 respondents (11.8%) considered them "very helpful". This means that a total of 53.6 percent of the respondents found the discussions helpful. In contrast, only 24 of the respondents (15.7%) considered the discussions not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". Fewer than one-third of the respondents (30.7%) rated the discussions as "neutral".

Summary of the Physical-Related Questions

The individual questions (#12, 16, 20, 24, 28) on the physical aspects discussed at the Premarital Institute are summarized in Table 25 as follows:

TABLE 25

SUMMARY OF PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO THE
PHYSICAL-RELATED QUESTIONS (1980-1984)
SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE TOTALS.

NO. OF RESPONSES = 765

TOPIC	(1) NOT AT ALL HELPFUL	(2) NOT VERY HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL 1 & 2 COMBINED	(3) NEUTRAL	(4) SOME- WHAT HELPFUL	(5) VERY HELPFUL	HELPFUL 4 & 5 COMBINED
Understanding place of exercise and nutrition	25 16.3	24 15.7	49 32.0	56 36.6	39 25.5	9 5.9	48 31.4
Implications of hereditary factors	13 8.5	29 18.9	42 27.4	56 36.6	35 22.9	20 13.1	55 36.0
Concerns about pre- vious sexual relationships	8 5.2	18 11.8	26 17.0	60 39.2	42 27.5	25 16.3	67 43.8
Sexual initiative, affection, support	7 4.5	10 6.5	17 11.0	46 30.0	67 44.0	23 15.0	90 59.0
Birth control abortion, family size	9 5.9	15 9.8	24 15.7	47 30.7	64 41.8	18 11.8	82 53.6
TOTAL %	62 8.1	96 12.5	158 20.6	265 34.7	247 32.3	95 12.4	342 44.7

TABLE 25 shows that less than half of the respondents (44.7%) found the discussions pertaining to the physical-related topics to be "helpful". In contrast, one-fifth (20.6%) found them "not helpful". Within the category of "helpful", the results show that these physical-related topics can be ranked in a descending order of importance as follows: 1. sexual initiative, affection and support; 2. understanding the place of exercise and nutrition; 3. birth control, abortion, and family size; 4. addressing concerns about previous sexual relationships; and 5. the implications of hereditary factors.

In the "not helpful" category the results in a descending order of importance can be ranked as follows: 1. understanding the place of exercise and nutrition; 2. the implications of hereditary factors; 3. addressing concerns about previous sexual relationships; 4. birth control, abortion, and family size; and 5. sexual initiative, affection, and support.

Four of the five questions deal with the general area of sexuality. Of these four, in the "helpful" category, the two dealing with sexual initiative, affection and support, and with birth control, abortion and family size are rated higher than the other two questions which deal with concerns about previous sexual relationships and with the implications of hereditary factors. In the "not helpful" category the ratings of these same questions are directly reversed.

The question dealing with the topic of understanding the place of exercise and nutrition is ranked as second most "helpful" (56.4%) whereas it is ranked highest in the "not helpful" category (32.0%)

Slightly more than the one-third of the respondents (34.7%) rated the physical-related questions as "neutral". Within this neutral category, the results of the questions show a 9.2 percent difference ranging from the topic on concerns about previous sexual relationships (39.2%) to that of sexual initiative, affection and support (30.0%).

In summary form, TABLE 25 on the physical-related topics can be set out as follows:

Helpful	44.7%
Neutral	34.7%
Not helpful	20.6%

Question 13

How did the discussions help me to understand my own and my partner's religious beliefs and aspirations within our marriage? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 26

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 13

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	1	9	6	0
1981	3	4	11	5	1
1982	0	2	10	9	2
1983	7	2	11	12	3
1984	3	8	17	19	7
TOTAL	14	17	58	51	13
%	9.1	11.1	38.0	33.3	8.5

TABLE 26 shows that the highest number of the respondents (58 or 38.0%) rated the discussions as "neutral". One-third of the respondents (51 or 33.3%) found the discussions for understanding religious beliefs and aspirations in marriage to be "somewhat helpful". A further 13 respondents (8.5%) found the discussions to be "very helpful". This means that a total of 41.8 percent considered the discussions helpful. Slightly more than one-fifth (20.2%) of the respondents considered that the discussions were not helpful, that is, "not very helpful", or "not at all helpful".

Question 17

How did the discussions help me to recognize that different religious traditions may be a source of potential marital tension and conflict? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 27

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 17

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	1	9	5	1
1981	3	4	10	7	0
1982	0	2	9	9	3
1983	2	6	12	8	7
1984	2	7	20	19	6
TOTAL	8	20	60	48	17
%	5.2	13.1	39.2	31.4	11.1

TABLE 27 shows that almost one-third of the respondents (48 or 31.4%) found that the discussions on the recognition that different religious traditions may be a source of potential marital tension and conflict to be "somewhat helpful". A further 17 respondents (11.1%) found the discussions "very helpful". This means that a total of 45.2% considered them helpful. Fewer than one-fifth of the respondents (18.3%) considered the discussions as not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". Sixty of the respondents (39.2%) rated the discussions as "neutral".

Question 21

How did the discussions help me to discuss how central the practice of religion will be to us in our marriage? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 28

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 21

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	1	9	5	1
1981	2	1	14	7	0
1982	0	2	12	8	1
1983	4	5	10	13	4
1984	1	6	26	17	4
TOTAL	8	15	70	50	10
%	5.2	9.8	45.8	32.7	6.5

TABLE 28 shows that slightly less than one-third of the respondents (32.7%) found that the discussions on how central the practice of religion is to marriage to be "somewhat helpful". A further 10 respondents (6.5%) considered them "very helpful". This means that a total of 60 respondents (39.2%) considered the discussions as helpful. Twenty-three respondents (15.0%) considered the discussions as not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". The highest number of respondents (70 or 45.8%) rated them as "neutral".

Question 25

How did the discussions help me to come to an agreement regarding the religious faith tradition we choose to incorporate into our marriage and pass on to our children? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 29

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 25

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	2	1	10	5	0
1981	2	3	16	3	1
1982	0	1	10	8	4
1983	4	3	15	7	6
1984	4	7	25	14	3
TOTAL	12	14	76	37	14
%	7.8	9.2	49.6	24.2	9.2

TABLE 29 shows that slightly fewer than one-quarter of the respondents (37 or 24.2%) found the discussions regarding the choice of religious faith tradition to pass on to their children as "somewhat helpful", while a further 14 respondents (9.2%) considered the discussions to be "very helpful". This means that a total of one-third of the respondents (33.4%) considered them to be helpful. Twenty-six of the respondents (17.0%) considered the discussions as not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". Very close to one-half of the respondents (49.6%) rated the discussions as "neutral".

Question 29

How did the discussions help me to deal with my own personal religious convictions in a society with many different values? The past participants' responses are shown in the following table:

TABLE 30

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION 29

(1980-1984) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	NOT AT ALL NOT VERY			SOMEWHAT VERY	
YEAR	HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL
1980	1	2	8	6	0
1981	4	3	10	6	1
1982	2	3	9	8	1
1983	5	1	17	9	3
1984	4	7	20	20	3

TOTAL	15	16	66	47	9
%	9.8	10.5	43.1	30.7	5.9

TABLE 30 shows that close to one-third of the respondents (30.7%) found the discussions on how to deal with one's own personal religious convictions in a society with many different values as "somewhat helpful". A further 9 respondents (5.9%) considered them to be "very helpful". This means that a total of 36.6 percent of the respondents found the discussions to be helpful. One-fifth of the respondents (20.3%) considered that the discussions were not helpful, that is, "not very helpful" or "not at all helpful". The highest number of respondents (66 or 43.1%) rated the discussions as "neutral".

Summary of the Spiritual-Related Questions

The individual questions (#13, 17, 21, 25, 29) on the spiritual aspects discussed at the Premarital Institute are summarized in Table 31 as follows:

TABLE 31

SUMMARY OF PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO THE

SPIRITUAL-RELATED QUESTIONS (1980-1984)

SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE TOTALS.

NO. OF RESPONSES = 765

TOPIC	(1)	(2)	NOT HELPFUL 1 & 2 COMBINED	(3) NEUTRAL	(4)	(5)	HELPFUL 4 & 5 COMBINED
	NOT AT ALL HELPFUL	NOT VERY HELPFUL			SOME- WHAT HELPFUL	VERY HELPFUL	
Understanding religious beliefs and aspirations	14 9.1	17 11.1	31 20.2	58 38.0	51 33.3	13 8.5	64 41.8
Recognizing religious traditions as conflict	8 5.2	20 13.1	28 18.3	60 39.2	48 31.4	17 11.1	65 42.5
Place of religious practice	8 5.2	15 9.8	23 15.0	70 45.8	50 32.7	10 6.5	60 39.2
Agreement about religious tradition for children	12 7.8	14 9.2	26 17.0	76 49.6	37 24.2	14 9.2	51 33.4
Dealing with one's relig- ious convict- ions in a pluralistic society	15 9.8	16 10.5	31 20.3	66 43.1	47 30.7	9 5.9	56 36.6
TOTAL %	57 7.5	82 10.7	139 18.2	330 43.1	233 30.5	63 8.2	296 38.7

TABLE 31 shows that more than one-third of the respondents (38.7%) found the discussions pertaining to the spiritual-related questions as "helpful". In contrast, a minority of respondents (18.2%) found them "not helpful". The majority of the respondents (43.1%) rated the questions as "neutral". Within the category of "helpful" the results show that these spiritual-related topics can be ranked in a descending order of importance as follows: 1. recognizing different religious traditions as a source of potential conflict; 2. understanding different religious beliefs and aspirations; 3. the place of religious practice; 4. dealing with one's religious convictions in a pluralistic society; and 5. agreement about religious tradition for the children.

In the "not helpful" category the results in a descending order of importance can be ranked as follows: 1. dealing with one's religious convictions in a pluralistic society; 2. understanding religious beliefs and aspirations; 3. recognizing different religious traditions as a source of potential conflict; 4. agreement about the religious tradition for the children; and 5. the place of religious practice.

Within each of the 3 categories being considered the results indicate little variation among the five topics.

In summary form, TABLE 31 on the spiritual-related questions are as follows:

Neutral	43.1%
Helpful	38.7%
Not helpful	18.2%

Summary of Part IIQuestions 10-29

Of the four aspects treated at the Premarital Institute's discussions, the responses to the emotional aspect show the most positive overall response, that is, the emotional aspect was perceived as eight times more helpful than not helpful. The past participants considered the social aspect as the second most helpful, which was rated three times more helpful than not helpful. The physical aspect and the spiritual aspect are each seen as two times more helpful than not helpful by the past participants.

(Questions #30-31 were included at the request of the director of the Premarital Institute. The tabular responses to these questions are found in Appendix C.)

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into four major sections. The first section provides a summary of the purpose and methodology of the survey. The second section presents the major findings of this investigation. A discussion of conclusions based on the findings is contained in the third section. The last section offers recommendations made by this researcher for improving the Premarital Institute's program.

Summary

This study examined past participants' opinions regarding the goals of the Premarital Institute. The overall purpose of the survey was to determine at the time of follow-up the degree of perceived helpfulness which the past participants received from the program conducted at the Premarital Institute.

The survey instrument was a 36-item questionnaire which consisted of three parts: Part I collected demographic data; Part II provided the questions used to determine the degree of perceived helpfulness; and the

data collected from Part III was intended primarily as feedback for the Institute itself.

Once the questionnaire had been validated, all 297 couples who had attended the Institute from 1980-1984 inclusive were sent a copy of the questionnaire to be completed. One hundred and fifty-three individuals completed and returned the questionnaire. These completed questionnaires provided the data for this study.

Findings

Based on the analyses of the data, the following findings are evident:

1. The majority of people who attended the Premarital Institute were largely college-educated, white collar workers, and Christian with most affiliated to the Lutheran Church. The highest percentage of responses were received from those who had most recently attended the Institute (1984). Ninety-five percent of the total respondents married the partner with whom they attended the Institute.

2. Of the four aspects treated, the emotional-related questions were perceived as the most helpful. Most respondents considered that they were helped most in becoming aware of the partner's values, needs and feelings. Questions which focused on oneself and on the creation of an emotional climate conducive to growth in marriage were seen as less helpful than questions which focused on the partner. (See Table 13).

3. Of the four aspects treated in the program the social-related questions were perceived as the second most helpful. Questions dealing with the topics of leisure and the establishment of a financial policy were perceived as more helpful than questions which dealt with contact with relatives and addressing needs arising from the work situation. (See Table 19).

4. The aspect dealing with the physical-related questions was perceived as the third most helpful. The topic treating sexual initiative, affection and support was considered as helpful by nearly two-thirds of the respondents. Understanding the place of exercise and nutrition, as a topic, was considered not helpful by nearly one-third of the respondents. (See Table 25).

5. Of the four aspects treated in the program, the spiritual aspect overall was considered by the respondents as least helpful. Most respondents ranked this aspect as neutral. From the point of view of perceived helpfulness, the topic dealing with recognition of different religious traditions as a source of potential tension and conflict was considered more helpful than the topic on agreement about the religious tradition for the children. (See Table 31).

6. In the Additional Comment section, Part III, (see Appendix D), the responses to the questions offer the following feedback: a) the majority of the respondents requested that the topic of how children affect marriages should be included; b) in their assessment of the pro-

gram the majority of the respondents also requested that more indepth discussions and more communication skills practical sessions should be incorporated into the program; c) most respondents had learned about the Premarital Institute through their local church; and d) a very small minority of the respondents has been involved in marital or other counseling-related programs since their attendance at the Premarital Institute.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, we can conclude that:

1. The emotional-related component of the program was the most effective of the four aspects considered. The review of literature indicated that the imparting of factual material was not the sole purpose of premarital counseling. Attitudes and feelings elicited from topics are much more important than the content itself (Matheson, 1977; Stahmann and Hiebert, 1977). It is concluded, therefore, that an effort is needed to synthesize from the literature and elicit from participating individuals what are their various extant felt needs to be specifically integrated into the Institute's program.

2. Also, since the emotional-related component was considered by the respondents to be the most consistently "helpful" aspect of the four aspects (emotional, physical, social, spiritual), it can be concluded that: (i) there was a perceived need and obvious positive response to a

learning about oneself in relationships; (ii) there was a slightly greater desire to be aware of one's partners values needs and feelings than one's own; (iii) respondents have a personal need for the self-expression of values, needs and feelings; and (iv) emotional-related issues are prominent in the lived experience of couples.

These conclusions concur with the literature which reports that self-knowledge and knowledge of one's partner and of the relationship is becoming primary to couples (Guldner, 1971; Stahmann and Hiebert, 1980; Van Zoost, 1973). In an informational, computer age people may perhaps seek out counseling to keep in touch with their emotions.

3. In reviewing the literature it could not be ascertained if one method of premarital counseling was preferred or used more than another. Small groups for short periods seemed most effective according to several authors (Glendening and Wilson, 1972; Miller, Nunnally and Wackman, 1976; Van Zoost, 1973).

In our study, slightly more than half of the respondents considered that the social-related category was "helpful". We can conclude that this means: (i) the respondents did not learn any new information on financial matters; (ii) they considered the presentation of the material as unclear or inadequate; (iii) the importance of leisure time in one's marriage is considered by nearly half of the respondents as less important than financial issues; (iv) that respondents have a felt need for friends of the same or opposite sex both for oneself and for one's part-

ner; (v) that the majority of the respondents did not agree about the need for negotiating contact with relatives, or did not recognize that such a need was important; (vi) that addressing needs created by work or profession did not seem to be a need; and (vii) that the discussions did not heighten their awareness of such a need.

A review of literature indicates that very little emphasis on leisure occurs. Positive sources do exist. Orthner (1975: 101) concludes that it is time to consider the dimensions of leisure in addition to work as an influencing variable in family relations. He states:

It is time to consider the dimensions of leisure in addition to work as an influencing variable in family relations. The ability of leisure to influence the family may be increasing and if the family is moving toward companionship as a source of marital solidarity, then the leisure factor is of critical importance.

5. The physical-related component of the program was reportedly considered "helpful" by approximately half of the respondents. In a health conscious society such as ours this could mean: (i) that the program did not offer any further helpful information on this topic area other than what was already familiar to the respondents; (ii) that the topics were not a priority or concern for the respondents; (iii) that the topics were inadequately presented; (iv) that there is an obvious need on the part of the respondents to express fears and concerns to one's partner about previous relationships; and (v) that two-thirds of the respondents are aware of the need to make known their needs of sexuality, affection, and support to their partner.

A review of the literature shows that little emphasis is placed on the physical-health aspect of a couple's relationship (Stahmann and Hiebert, 1977).

6. It was expected that the participants would stress the importance of communication skills and conflict resolution as important topics for inclusion in the Institute's program. These topics are basic ones found in the literature (Tingue, 1958; Van Zoost, 1973; Ridley and others, 1979). Relatively fewer premarital programs included issues having to do with children or parenting issues (Glendening and Wilson, 1972; Mace, 1977; Rolfe, 1976, 1977). From the results of the present study it is concluded that the area of family planning is of concern to the majority of the respondents (53.6%)

7. From the results of the survey it can be concluded that the spiritual-related component of the program is perceived "helpful" to about 40 percent of the respondents. Another 40 percent remained "neutral". This could mean that in an ecumenical age: (i) religious differences are not perceived as sources of tension and conflict and/or; (ii) that the issue of the choice of religious faith tradition to be passed on to their children is not a significant issue for almost one-half of the respondents; (iii) that religious practice is not a high priority for the respondents; (iv) that many of the respondents do not perceive an important difference between their religious convictions and those held by society; and (v) that marrying one of a different religious tradition does not apply to nearly three-fifths of the respondents.

A review of the literature shows that some authors (Burkhart, 1951; Clinebell, 1977; Mitchell, 1967) consider the importance of shared commitment to spiritual values a significant aspect of couples' preparation for marriage.

Our study of the literature shows (Stahmann and Hiebert, 1980:37) that (i) clergy members who do not provide effective premarital counseling will likely have a premarital counseling model that is characterized as investigative and examining. Such a guardianship model will essentially place the institution and its desires over people and their desires; (ii) clergy members who do provide effective premarital counseling (Stahmann and Hiebert, 1980:37) are those whose methodology is designed to place people in a more important position than the institution and its ideals or expectations. They will attempt to meet individuals where they are both in their life and in their relationship. Stahmann and Hiebert (1980:37) state:

The pastoral counselor using a developmental model to work with couples premaritally will, we believe, more effectively be able to deal with each couple as they are.

Given the shift in seminary education and the new emphasis on pastoral counseling in general, clergy members more and more seek to meet the diverse and comprehensive needs of the variety of couples seeking premarital guidance. Clergy members are making use of interdisciplinary teams to draw on quality professional resources.

The overall results of the evaluation show that the program was perceived as helpful to the majority of respondents (25.8%). This researcher cautions against a too positive an interpretation of the results given the fact that: (i) the term "helpful" could carry a variety of connotations, such as, helpful because of the presentor or helpful because the topic was important to the specific needs of the individual/couple; (ii) we do not know how the program was perceived by approximately 75% of the participants (1980-1984).

Finally, our review of the literature shows that three theories are basic to any effective prenuptial preparation program to serve as a rationale for the selection of program content and procedure: (i) the articulation of a theory of family intervention and of family process/development (Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi, 1982); (ii) communication theory/identity and interpersonal competence (Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman, 1976); and (iii) interpersonal resource theory (Foa, 1971: 345-351).

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of the above study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. It is recommended that sessions be held in small, informal groups that invite couples to relate interpersonally and interact with like-circumstanced couples. Such groups are recommended so as to help couples become aware of their relationship issues and motivate them to begin relating early before their problems become too serious. Recom-

mended reading: Alive and Aware: Improving Communication in Relationships, (Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman, 1976).

2. It is recommended that didactic segments be shortened and that more self-information communication and metacommunication skills be taught as an integral part of the program from the outset. It is suggested that a Premarital Communication Lab follow a prepared structure (e.g. the Minnesota Couple Communication Program (MCCP), Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman, 1975). It is further suggested that practical experiential segments using structured communication relationship strengthening exercises (metacommunication, interpersonal resources, conflict negotiation, etc.) be an on-going segment of each evening's process and with each topic area being covered. Creative variations of presentation could include video taping, role playing, and psychodrama.

The most intensive and effective type of premarital counseling for couples includes structured communication and skill-building programs, but these are rarely offered or used by premarital couples (Olson, 1983:68).

3. From this researcher's use of the LGH library for this study it was evident that premarital counseling literature was scant. It is therefore recommended that a Premarital Resource File be created and that articles, books, video equipment, tapes and other potentially helpful resources be acquired and made readily accessible to both staff and participants.

4. It is recommended that the present aspects of the program be reconsidered in light of the subjects requests for further up-dated topic areas.

5. It is recommended that follow-up programs and special couples' growth groups be initiated for past participants. It is further suggested that conferences and seminars on marriage and family life and other relevant topics sponsored by Parkside be advertised and open to participants of the Premarital Institute.

6. It is recommended that monthly premarital institutes be initiated and that these programs be scheduled and publicized in a way that invites like-circumstanced couples to sign up. It is suggested that applicants be interviewed in person or by phone to ascertain their needs, expectations and previous premarital guidance.

7. It is recommended that qualified presenters include more women, as well as married couples, who are willing to share their experiences of making transitions from premarital to married life or to second marriages.

8. It is recommended that a new premarital inventory like PREPARE and/or the MCCP be added to the Institute's program.

9. It is recommended that married couples who themselves have liberated, egalitarian marriages become leaders involved with premarital couples to work with them through their first year(s) of married life.

10. It is recommended that the staff periodically evaluate:

- .their views about premarital couples.
- .the prenuptial programs being offered in local parishes to which the Institute's program acts as a supplement.
- .assumptions regarding couples' needs and expectations.
- .choice and implementation of (i) a theory of family intervention and development (Bagarozzi and Bagarozzi, 1982); (ii) a theory of communication (Miller, Nunnally, Wackman, 1976); and (iii) a theory of interpersonal resource (Foa, 1971), which will serve as a rationale for selection of program content and procedure.

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APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

Lutheran General Hospital
1775 Dempster Street
Park Ridge, Illinois 60068

March 26, 1985

To: Past Participants of the Premarital Institute

Some time ago you participated in the four week Premarital Institute at Lutheran General Hospital. It was our pleasure to be useful to you. You may remember my announcement that sometime in the future we might survey you regarding the effectiveness of the Institute. A questionnaire has been devised for this purpose and we are seeking your assistance. The questionnaire is short. Completion should take ten to fifteen minutes. Enclosed you will find the brief data sheet with the questionnaire, and space to invite your additional comments.

No name is required. Your replies will be held in strictest confidence. The data and information collected will be analyzed and used to improve the Institute as well as to form the basis for a graduate thesis. The project is being conducted by Sheila Barrett, a graduate student, under the auspices of Loyola University of Chicago in conjunction with Reverend Arthur O. Bickel, Chaplain at Lutheran General Hospital.

Two copies of the questionnaire will be sent to you (one for each individual). We highly value your individual assessments for our Premarital Institute.

Complete the questionnaire feedback then use the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope to return it to us. Please return within the same week in which you receive the questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your participation. Your honest assessment will help us to benefit others in future Premarital programs.

Sincerely,

Arthur O. Bickel, M. Th. (signed)

Sheila Barrett (signed)

enclosures

APPENDIX B

INSTRUMENT PART I

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM

PROMPT COMPLETION AND RETURN REQUESTED!

Part I: Personal Data

1. Sex: Male _____ Female _____
2. Circle the highest level of education completed:
 College: 1 2 3 4
 Graduate School: 1 2 3 4
3. When did you attend the Premarital Institute?
 Month _____ Year _____
4. Circle your status at the time of attendance:
 single separated married divorced remarried co-habiting
5. Circle present status:
 single separated married divorced remarried co-habiting
6. Are you now married to the person with whom you attended
 the Institute? Yes _____ No _____
7. Religious affiliation:
 Yours _____ Spouse _____
8. Employment: Yours currently _____
 Spouse (if living together) _____
9. If you have ever had professional counseling circle the
 types and the duration:

Individual _____	Months _____
Premarital _____	Months _____
Marital _____	Months _____
Family _____	Months _____
Group _____	Months _____
Divorce Mediation _____	Months _____

APPENDIX C

INSTRUMENT PART II

QUESTIONNAIRE

A number of different topics were discussed at the Premarital Institute including:

A Theology of Marriage

Communication in Marriage

The Meaning of Sex and Love in Marriage

How to Budget in Marriage

Emotional Differences Between the Sexes

Directions: Using a scale of 1-5, rank how the discussion of the above topic areas has HELPED you. A rank of 1 indicates that the topic discussed was NOT AT ALL HELPFUL. A rank of 5 indicates that the topic discussed was VERY HELPFUL.

SCALE:

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL

Discussion of these topic areas has HELPED me:

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 10. | To be more aware of my own values, needs and feelings. | 12345 |
| 11. | To establish a financial policy regarding the saving and spending of money earned. | 12345 |
| 12. | To understand the place of exercise and nutrition in the making of a healthy marital relationship. | 12345 |
| 13. | To understand my own and my partner's religious beliefs and aspirations within our marriage. | 12345 |
| 14. | To be more aware of my partner's values, needs and feelings. | 12345 |
| 15. | To evaluate what importance leisure time has in our | |

- marriage. 12345
16. To understand hereditary factors which could affect the health of self, partner, or children. 12345
 17. To recognize that different religious traditions may be a source of potential marital tension and conflict. 12345
 18. To express clearly my own values, needs and feelings. 12345
 19. To be clear about my own and my partner's need for friends of the same and of the opposite sex. 12345
 20. To express to my partner my fears and concerns related to previous dating, sexual preferences/affairs, marital relationships. 12345
 21. To discuss how central the practice of religion will be to us in our marriage. 12345
 22. To hear accurately my partner's expression of his/her values. 12345
 23. To negotiate the kind, frequency, and duration of contact with my own and my partner's relatives. 12345
 24. To discuss my feelings and preferences regarding sexual initiative, expression of affection, need for support and nurturance. 12345
 25. To come to an agreement regarding the religious faith tradition we choose to incorporate into our marriage and pass on to our children. 12345
 26. To create the emotional climate in my marriage that I consider growthful. 12345
 27. To address needs created by my own and my partner's work or profession. 12345
 28. To negotiate decisions regarding birth control, abortion and family size. 12345
 29. To deal with my own personal religious convictions in a society with many different values. 12345
 30. To become aware of my own and of my partner's areas of self-centeredness. 12345
 31. To accept my own and my partner's human limitations. 12345
32. CIRCLE TOPICS you wish had been addressed and were not:

wedding preparations	role expectations	cost of raising family
conflict management	social pressures	body language
premarital counseling services	marital counseling resources	budgeting (specify)
second marriages	divorce mediation resources	inter-faith marriages
adopted/step-children	mutual accountability	drug/alcohol use/abuse
philosophy of life	personal habits (smoking, drinking, etc.)	humor in marriage
living arrangements/housing	self-esteem	extra-marital affairs
in-laws	family prayer	child support
personality styles	recreation/leisure	family interaction

career goals	sex knowledge	pre-menstrual syndrome
family of origin	crisis management	how children affect
	(name type of _____)	marriages

Other topics not included above: _____

Part III: Additional Comments

33. How did you learn about the Premarital Institute at
Lutheran General? _____

34. Have you been involved in any other marital or related counseling
programs since you participated in the Premarital Institute?

Please name: _____

35. We value highly any additional comments, responses or suggestions
you wish to add regarding the Premarital Institute or to this
questionnaire. _____

36. Are there any other ways in which the Premarital Institute could
have been of help to you? Please state: _____

PROMPT RETURN OF QUESTIONNAIRE
WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

(Self-addressed/stamped envelope enclosed)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR OBSERVATIONS, TIME AND INTEREST.

TABLE 32

PAST PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS 30 and 31
 (1980-1984 COMBINED) SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE
 TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY		SOMEWHAT	VERY
HELPFUL	HELPFUL	NEUTRAL	HELPFUL	HELPFUL

Question 30:

TOTAL:	8	14	53	58	20
%	5.2	9.2	34.6	37.9	13.1

Question 31:

TOTAL:	5	6	38	74	30
%	3.3	3.9	24.8	48.4	19.6

APPENDIX D

INSTRUMENT PART III

EXAMINATION OF ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

QUESTIONS 32-36

The purpose of Part III was to invite past participants to offer additional comments about the Premarital Institute's program. Five items were formulated. Analyses are presented in tabular and narrative form which follows.

Additional Comment: #32

Additional Comment #32 asked past participants to circle from a given list topics which they wished had been addressed and were not during their attendance at the Premarital Institute. The results are shown in Table 33.

TABLE 33

TOPICS REQUESTED BY PAST PARTICIPANTS SHOWN IN
NUMBER OF REQUESTS AND RANK ORDER (1 = HIGHEST)

RANK	TOPICS	NO. OF REQUESTS	
1	How children affect marriages	66	
2	Role expectations	58	
3	Cost of raising a family	49	
3	In-laws	49	
5	Conflict management	42	
5	Budgeting - basic	7	
	- in-depth	35	42
7	Humor in marriage	37	
8	Self-esteem	35	
8	Social pressures	35	
10	Career goals	32	
11	Personality styles	30	
12	Adopted and step-children	26	
13	Premenstrual Syndrome	25	
14	Body language	23	
14	Personal habits	23	
16	Family prayer	21	
17	Second marriages	19	
18	Family interaction	18	
19	Mutual accountability	16	
20	Wedding preparations	15	
21	Recreation and leisure	14	
22	Extra-marital affairs	13	
22	Inter-faith marriages	13	
24	Philosophy of life	12	
25	Living arrangements	11	
26	Child support	10	
26	Marital counseling	10	
28	Premarital counseling	9	
28	Sex knowledge	9	
30	Crisis management	5	
30	Drug, alcohol use and abuse	5	
32	Family of origin	3	
33	Divorce mediation	0	

In addition to the above topics twelve additional topics were listed by the participants to be included in the Institute's program. They are:

1. Disease and long-term family illness
2. Adoption; infertility; surrogate parenting
3. More in-depth marriage talks
4. Parenting children with special needs
5. Religious differences
6. The need for God
7. Time management
8. Dealing with children of second marriages
9. Separated parents' rights regarding child visits
10. Discuss expected problems in early marriage
11. Couple's measure apart from responsibility for children
12. Ethnic pressures
13. "Hands on" listening and communication skills seminars

Additional Comment: #33

Additional Comment #33 asked participants to state how they learned about the Premarital Institute at Lutheran General. Of the 153 respondents to the survey, 140 learned about the program from one of three sources as Table 34 shows:

TABLE 34

SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE PREMARITAL
INSTITUTE SHOWN IN NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE
TOTALS. NO. OF RESPONDENTS = 153.

PARTICIPANTS	LOCAL CHURCH PASTOR	NEWSPAPER	LUTHERAN GENERAL'S PAMPHLET
TOTAL	121	15	4
%	86.4	10.7	2.9

The vast majority (86.4%) of the respondents learned about the programs conducted by the Premarital Institute from their local church pastor.

Additional Comment: #34

Additional Comment #34 asked the past participants to state if they have been involved in marital or counseling-related programs since they participated in the program at the Premarital Institute. If so, they were asked to name the type of counseling.

Eight respondents had been involved in church-related programs, four in professional counseling, and four in the Pre-Cana program, a nationwide premarriage program conducted by the Catholic Church.

Additional Comments: #35 and #36

Additional Comments #35 and #36 asked the past participants to assess the overall program and to offer suggestions how the Premarital program might be improved. The outcome of the respondents' suggestions is summarized as follows:

1. More in-depth discussions (theology, budgeting, etc.)
2. More communication skills practice
3. Examples from experienced married couples
4. Reduction of class size
5. Smaller groups
6. Extend duration of program
7. Follow-up by the Institute's personnel
8. More women presenters
9. Organize sessions to meet special needs of couple types (e.g. divorcees, older couples, etc.).

Summary of Part IIIQuestions 32-36

The overall comments by the respondents show that the respondents took the program seriously. This is indicated particularly in their assessment summarized in the combined responses to Questions 35 and 36. Part III responses will be used as feedback by the Premarital Institute.

APPENDIX E

History and Development of the
Premarital Institute at
Lutheran General Hospital

The Premarital Institute is part of the Pastoral Care Division at Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge, Illinois. The Institute was organized in 1962 shortly after the opening of the Lutheran General Medical Complex, December, 1959.

The philosophy of the hospital founders was to have a hospital "without walls" - a facility whereby concentrated use of interdisciplinary personnel resources could be made available to the needs of the general public. One of these needs was for a program for couples in marriage preparation. The purpose of the Premarital Institute was to supplement (not be a substitute for) marriage preparation programs conducted in local parishes.

Lutheran General Hospital originally sponsored the Institute's program four times a year from 1962 to 1972. Since that time the program has expanded to six times a year and is conducted on alternate months. The program's format remains basically unchanged over the past 23 years and has always been designed for premarital couples. Couples meet weekly for three hours for discussions and presentations on topics related to the intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual aspects of their relationship in view of marriage. The program is ecumenical.

Belief in the concept of marriage preparation led the program designers toward development of a program with these specific goals: i) to provide premarital couples with useful information in the areas of potential conflicts: finance, faith, fidelity, and family frustrations; ii) to facilitate premarital couples' constructive communication, conversation, and conflict management; and iii) to provide a Christian context for couples to prepare themselves for marriage.

The cardinal conviction of the program is the belief that marriage preparation is one of life's most serious and important preparations.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Mary Sheila Barrett has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Manuel S. Silverman, Director
Professor, Counseling Psychology and Higher Education,
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Dr. Donald R. Hossler
Assistant Professor, Higher Education and Student Affairs,
Indiana University

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

12-3-85
Date

Manuel S. Silverman
Director's Signature